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ABSTRACT

The National Federation for the Improvement of Rural Education (NFIRE) Conference on the Emerging Role of Regional Service Centers (RESA), a gathering of educational leaders from 19 States, was held in January 1974 (Las Vegas, Nevada). It examined alternatives and resolved issues related to the development, organization, and operation of RESA's that serve non-metropolitan school districts. The conference was organized around 3 clusters of issues: (1) legislative and financial arrangements that provide RESA's with the authority and financial support they needed to be effective; (2) the roles and role relationships RESA's should seek to develop; and (3) services and service giving strategies that are most needed and most effective. Several alternatives were examined for their comparative consequences, both on the operations of RESA's and on the districts and students they seek to serve. These alternatives came from 2 sources: the varied patterns of operations represented and reported by conference participants, and the papers and the 3 general sessions of speeches delivered at the conference. Papers were presented in 4 simultaneous discussion groups, with an observer in each to report on the discussions. This publication, which contains a complete report of the conference proceedings, includes the conference program outline, the speeches, the conceptual papers, and the report of the discussion group observers. (NQ)

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THE EMERGING ROLE OF REGIONAL SERVICE CENTERS

Proceedings of the Second National Conference

NATIONAL
FEDERATION for the
IMPROVEMENT of
RURAL
EDUCATION

RC007883

Las Vegas, Nevada
January 30 - February 1, 1974

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

National Federation for the Improvement of Rural Education
Las Vegas, Nevada
January 30 - February 1, 1974

Wednesday, January 30

Registration		2:00 p.m.
Special Projects Presentations and Displays	(Biloxi, Memphis, Orleans, and Delta Plantation Rooms)	3:00 p.m.
Special Projects Presentations and Displays Repeated		4:00 p.m.

FIRST GENERAL SESSION - Ed Krahmer, President of NFIRE, conducting — 7:30 p.m. — Natchez Room

Introductions
Conference Overview
Keynote Address: "The Emerging Role of the Regional Service Center in Rural Areas" -- Gerald J. Kluempke, Executive Director of the National Advisory Council on Supplementary Centers and Services

Thursday, January 31

SECOND GENERAL SESSION - Dwayne Schmaltz, President Elect of NFIRE, conducting — 9:00 a.m. — Natchez Room

Address: "Goodbye Yesterday: Issues and Alternatives Facing Regional Educational Service Agencies" -- Rowan C. Stutz, Executive Director of NFIRE and Director of the Rural Education Program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

FIRST SMALL GROUP PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION — 10:00 a.m.

Group A - Patterns of Legislation and Finance -- Walter G. Turner, Executive Director, Northern Colorado Board of Cooperative Services — Biloxi Room

Group B - Role and Role Relationships of the Regional Service Center -- E. Robert Stephens, Chairman, Department of Administrative Supervision and Curriculum, College of Education, University of Maryland — Memphis Room

Group C - Regional Services from the User's Viewpoint -- Don Mrdjenovich, Superintendent of Schools, Watertown, Wisconsin — Orleans Room

Group D - Regional Services from the Center's Viewpoint -- John E. Uxer, Executive Director, Region XIX Education Service Center, El Paso, Texas — Delta Plantation

SECOND SMALL GROUP PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION — 11:15 a.m.

(The above topics and rooms will be repeated.)

LUNCH (on your own) — 12:30

THIRD SMALL GROUP PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION — 2:00 p.m.

(The above topics and rooms will be repeated.)

THIRD GENERAL SESSION - Rowan Stutz, conducting — 3:30 p.m. — Natchez Room

"The Elements of a Best-Fit Model"
A report from each of the discussion groups

DINNER AND EVENING ON THE TOWN (on your own) — 5:00 p.m.

Complementary cocktail hour -- Shiloh Room — 6:30 p.m.

Friday, February 1

FOURTH GENERAL SESSION - Frank Heesacker, Immediate Past President of NFIRE, conducting — 10:00 a.m. — Natchez Room

"What We Heard Was..."--Panel of Observers

Closing Address: "Visions of the Future for Rural Regional Service Centers" -- Dr. Harty Cushman, Dean Emeritus, Professor of Education, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota

The Emerging Role of Regional Service Centers

Proceedings of the
Second National Conference
of
NFIRE
The National Federation
for the Improvement
of Rural Education

Sponsored by

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June 1974

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EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CLEARINGHOUSE ON RURAL EDUCATION AND SMALL SCHOOLS (CRESS)

New Mexico State University

Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003

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This booklet may be duplicated in whole or in part, whenever such duplication is in the interest of bettering education.

CONTENTS

		Page
INTRODUCTION		1
FIRST GENERAL SESSION		
Keynote Address: "The Emerging Role of the Regional Service Center in Rural Areas"	Gerald J. Kluempke	5
SECOND GENERAL SESSION		
Address: "Goodbye Yesterday: Issues and Alternatives Facing Regional Educational Service Agencies"	Rowan C. Stutz	17
Issues and Alternatives Worksheets	Rowan C. Stutz	29
SMALL GROUP PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION		
Group A - Patterns of Legislation and Finance		
Paper: "Educational Cooperation: A National Study of Regional Units"	Walter G. Turner	37
Group B - Role and Role Relationships of the Regional Service Center		
Paper: "The Governance and Organizational Affiliation of Regional Educational Service Agencies: Arms of the State Education Agency, Pure Creatures of Constituent Local Districts, or Pure Special District Governments?"	E. Robert Stephens	57
Group C - Regional Services From the User's Viewpoint		
Paper: "Regional Service Centers - A Consumer's Viewpoint"	Donald Mrdjenovich	89

Group D - Regional Services From the Center's Viewpoint

Paper: "Regional Service Centers Serving Both Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Areas"	John E. Uxer	115

FOURTH GENERAL SESSION

Panel of Observers' Reports	~~Bill Buell~~ Carolyn Hunter Nancy Buell John Parker	133
Closing Address: "Visions of the Future for Rural Regional Service Centers"	Marty Cushman	149

NFIRE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS 163

NFIRE MEMBERSHIP LIST - 1974 171

INTRODUCTION

The National Federation for the Improvement of Rural Schools (NFIRE) is a consortium of over 35 agencies that are actively promoting educational development in rural America. Its purpose is to improve educational opportunities for rural children and youth by improving the quality of education in small rural schools. In accomplishing its general purpose, NFIRE specifically seeks to: direct the attention of governmental agencies, educational associations, institutions of higher learning, state school agencies, professional associations, and others toward the unique problems of rural education; stimulate research in rural education and related disciplines; develop innovative ideas for experimental projects and programs designed to improve the quality of rural education; coordinate the various small school improvement projects throughout the country; provide training centers for teachers, administrators, researchers, and other school personnel in the unique aspects of service in rural schools; and desseminate information about rural education, identifying needs and describing improvement practices.

In cooperation with the ERIC/CRESS Center at the New Mexico State University and the Rural Education Program of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), Portland, Oregon, NFIRE recently sponsored a conference for the directors of Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESA's), and members of state education agencies and others interested in issues and alternatives facing RESA's today.

The 1974 NFIRE Conference on the Emerging Role of Regional Service Centers, a gathering of educational leaders from 19 states, was held in Las Vegas, Nevada, in January 1974. It was conceived by the Board of Directors of NFIRE to examine alternatives and resolve issues related to the development, organization, and operation of RESA's that serve non-metropolitan school districts.

The concern of all those who attended the conference as well as of those who sponsored it was for the quality of educational opportunities available to students who live and attend schools in the sparsely populated areas of the country. Because RESA's are a relatively new and increasingly potent force for providing needed leadership and missing services to rural school districts, it was felt that a conference dealing with issues affecting these agencies would be both timely and productive. The hope is that RESA's can provide the impetus and capability for launching the kind of rural educational renaissance that is needed if rural people are not to continue to be shortchanged in their educational opportunities.

The conference was organized around three clusters of issues: (1) What legislative and financial arrangements provide RESA's with the authority and financial support they needed to be effective? (2) What roles and role relationships should RESA's seek to develop? (3) What services and service giving strategies are most needed and most effective?

Several alternatives for resolving these issues were examined for their comparative consequences, both on the operations of RESA's and on the districts and students they seek to serve. These alternatives came

from two sources: the varied patterns of operations represented and reported by conference participants and the papers and speeches delivered at the conference.

The speeches were delivered in three general sessions, and papers were presented in four simultaneous discussion groups. Each of these groups met three times, providing each person at the conference the opportunity to participate in three of the four discussions.

Each group was assigned an observer, who reported during the final general session on what s/he thought s/he had heard during group discussions.

This publication contains a complete report of the conference proceedings. Included are: the conference program outline, copies of each of the three speeches, copies of the four conceptual papers, and the report of the discussion group observers.

NFIRE, in cooperation with the ERIC/CRESS Center at the New Mexico State University, is proud to be able to provide this material. To those who participated in the conference, it will provide a helpful reminder of the conference proceedings and of the plans they made to improve the operations of RESA's back home. To others, it is hoped this material will provide the incentive and some of the resources needed to improve learning opportunities for rural youngsters by strengthening the capability of RESA's to serve rural school districts.

THE EMERGING ROLE OF THE REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER IN RURAL AREAS

by

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I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you today. As one who grew up in a small town in rural Minnesota, I have a special feeling for the needs of rural education and for the children who attend these schools.

Parents in rural areas as well as those in urban and suburban areas want the best for their children. And, due to today's better communications system, they are increasingly aware that many schools provide services that once were considered frills. They have come to take it for granted that their children will receive more from schooling than proficiency in the three R's. And, the pressure is on for still more services.

At the same time, citizens in all parts of the country are questioning whether schools are making the best use of available funds and frequently make their thoughts known by defeating school bond issues. Add to this an eroding tax base in many areas of the country and the result is a mismatch between the demands for more services and the means available to meet the demands.

These are not revelations to any of you, I'm sure.

Solutions are difficult, but one of the most effective solutions I have observed is that of regional cooperation.

The idea is not new. It was the basic concept leading to the provision for Title III as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed in 1965. By supplying funds for centers which would supplement the activities of local school districts, Title III encouraged the sharing of services among combinations of districts.

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More than half of the first 217 proposals for Title III approved by the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) concerned multidistrict projects, often provided through a supplementary center.

Unfortunately, many of the centers used the money to buy audiovisual and other technological equipment and to furnish the centers in a somewhat grandiose fashion. What resulted, all too often, was the same thing that many parents observe when they give their child a shiny new toy for Christmas. After a few days, the novelty wears off, the toy ends up in a corner, unused, and the parents get the feeling they've blown their money.

Many of the supplementary centers came to the same disastrous and short end. The equipment was not made use of and the centers were closed. Title III administrators in USOE then focused on allocating funds for innovative and exemplary programs that could or could not take the form of supplementary centers and services. The key word, however, became "innovation."

Among the centers and services currently supported in whole or in part with Title III funds, some exciting and innovative things are happening that I think will be of particular interest to you.

Particularly for schoolchildren with special needs, the services provided by a regional center or program supported by Title III are often the only means for a physically, emotionally, or mentally handicapped youngster to receive the counseling, education, training, and health services needed to face the difficulties he or she will encounter throughout life.

A small school district with a small number of handicapped children is handicapped itself if it tries to provide the needed services for these children. The educational requirements of the majority of students take precedence over creation of special classes or employment of special teachers for the handicapped.

Other services currently being supported by Title III are enabling children of diverse cultural backgrounds, living in sparsely settled regions, to receive health services, counseling, exposure to the fine arts, vocational and career education, driver education, and library services.

At one time the consolidation of school districts was seen as the way to these "extras" for large numbers of students at one time. Not any more, after the sobering experience of more than 20 years of trial leading to the conclusion that big is not synonymous with better.

The symbol of consolidation--impressive looking glass, steel, and concrete structures--came to mean little to the student who spent hours getting to one of these superconglomerates and home again, often to receive less than a "quality education." So, as Charlie Chaplin would say, "The sober dawn awakens a new man."

This brings us back again to the regional educational center, the emerging concept, in my view, for taking care of the multiple needs of a widely scattered population in a cost-effective way. Through regional cooperation and the concurrent pooling of resources and talent, the special needs of students can be met, specialized education courses can be offered, and information can be shared. With good planning and wise

administration, available technology becomes a tool in the hands of the wise, rather than a toy in the hands of a child. With imagination, successful educational practices can be adopted or adapted, often with little additional cost to cooperating districts.

In addition, one of the main benefits of receiving an education in a small rural school--close teacher-pupil relationships--remains intact. The rural schools in particular have the experience to exercise positive leadership in this area--experience that can ease the learning process for large urban schools that are now trying to make a student feel less like a punched, staples, and mutilated computer card and more like a cared-for person in a humane education system.

The regional cooperative also offers the solution to the problem of delivery of services to students who are separated by miles, but joined by similar problems. The challenge of delivery has always been one of getting the children to the services or the services to the children, particularly in the isolated, sparsely settled regions with transportation problems, in the West where distances are great, in the Appalachians over mountainous roads, and in New England and the upper Middle West where the winters are severe.

We're pleased that Title III contributed to the acceleration of regional planning back in 1965. We've learned a lot since then. As an example, I'd like to tell you the lessons learned by a Title III project in Kansas which set out to create special education programs on a regional basis. Local districts found that by working together, they could

identify their combined needs and clearly state their objectives for programs. The Kansas project graphically explained in a brochure just how precise objectives must be: "We ditch diggers will be glad to go to work when we have been told how damn wide, how damn long, how damn deep, and which damn direction."

The project also learned a number of lessons in human relations and good PR. For instance, shared responsibility and decision making is a must. People won't accept what they don't want and services cannot be forced on them. Teachers and citizens alike will be more interested and cooperative if they are kept informed and encouraged to actively participate from day one to final approval or adoption of an innovation.

Likewise, administrators will be more apt to cooperate if they become involved. Even so, the Kansas project advises that an outside force may be needed, not only to bring together administrators of nearby districts but to work with them in arriving at compromise, when necessary.

These are some of the lessons. Now I'd like to tell you of some of the new cooperative efforts around the country in which Title III is involved:

Project DILENOWISCO, a cooperative operating in the state of Virginia, uses television as the medium to enable children in isolated areas to receive the benefits of a home-based kindergarten program. In addition to the daily program, a fully equipped trailer stops at a number of central locations each week. Using the trailer as a base, home visitors take toys and teaching materials to the children's home and demonstrate for parents how they can help their children learn at home.

In Oregon a Title III project, Institutionalizing Innovations in Small Schools, has been helping small high schools and their feeder elementary school individualize instruction.

In Western New York, Title III funded a project that developed a model for a Planning, Programming Budgeting System. It was then picked up by Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and made available to any system interested in finding out if the model is suitable to its needs. If so, a consultant usually helps to adapt the model to the system's needs.

I would like to share with you a project director's experience as he reflected upon his first visit to a rural school in Northern California. The comments are excerpted from an unpublished report on the Basic Skills Improvement Project by director Jack Lutz of Chico, California. It occurred to me that Mr. Lutz's experience may be similar to one you have had since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was introduced in 1965.

> You carefully guide your mud-spattered car to a safe parking spot on the shoulder of the unpaved rutted road that runs in front of the white one-room school. As you release your seat belt, your mind flashes back to your first visit here over a year ago on a warm, lazy fall day. You're just a little uneasy about what to expect on this trip. Although you have a hunch that you may be more concerned than you should be, you can't seem to stifle the worry that has nagged at you since you scheduled the visit.
>
> You took in every detail of the room that day, as your eyes slowly scanned the desks, arranged as if in military formation. You noted mentally the arrangement of children by grades, their physical size providing this data input. What was it your college professor had suggested you would find... "the rural one-room school models the ungraded concept."

Your heart sinks just a bit as you see no trace of ungradedness here!

You can still vividly recall the depressed feeling you had as you drove away from that first visit to this school. You all too clearly remember your first thought: "I can't help this teacher." The thought depressed you, you questionned your own wisdom for having taken on this job. You weren't helped when you recalled that this was only one of twenty plus experimental schools you had to work with. The mere thought of those schools, scattered over fourteen counties, made you almost want to abandon the idea of making the effort to provide assistance. The task seemed insurmountable, and your resources appeared too meager to accomplish the objectives of this project. To put it mildly you felt very depressed on that day that now seems so far removed.

Now as you neared the door of the school on this second visit, you had to suppress a strong desire to turn away. The sights that greet you, however, as you step through the doorway quickly erased any lingering doubts about being here. The room environment had undergone a total change, and you were sure your face revealed the glowing surprise bursting inside you.

You noted children moving freely around the room on personal learning missions, seeking out learning resources often found in a teacher-made skill game, learning centers, or the teacher herself. At your entrance you observe the easy way the teacher looks up, the smile that says, "hello, welcome to our school" as she continues to help a small child. You further note the work of children festooning the walls under encouraging and rewarding captions such as We all know something about our community or Share with me my story. Even more encouraging are the children who frequently wander over to read another child's work.

Desks have been moved to the outer perimeters of the room, replaced by a rug with children studiously sprawled on it. Each child is busy at a learning task, nor do they hesitate to converse among themselves seeking assistance from each other. You continue your observation by noting mentally that a large boy is seated with a smaller one at the math center, aiding the smaller child in mastering the serialization of numbers. The room noise level was up but your educational senses tell you they are busy learning. Children without hesitation speak to you or readily include you in their learning activities.

As you drove away, you almost burst with the pride you felt toward this little school, its teacher and her children.

Like Project Director Lutz, each of us in our own special way acts as an educational change agent. We aim to bring about positive change and renewal.

Reflect upon an organization you are associated with and reflect upon the following questions which are based on the works of change agents such as John Gardner, Gordon Lippitt, and Warren Bennis.

1. Does the organization have an effective program for the recruitment and development of talented manpower?
2. Has the organization an environment that encourages individuality and releases individual motivations?
3. Is there an adequate system of two-way communication in the organization?
4. Does the organization have a fluid and adaptable internal structure?
5. Are there ample opportunities and situations where the organization provides a process of self-criticism?
6. Has the organization developed effective face-to-face groups for accomplishment of work goals?
7. Is the organization able to cope with change?
8. Does a climate of trust exist between individuals and groups in the organization?
9. How frequently and willingly has the organization evaluated its objectives and purposes, decision-making processes, and goals?

Title III has planted the seeds for many educational innovations--in teacher/staff development, environmental education, reading, and other academic areas. Some projects aim at specific student groups--the culturally diverse, the dropout, the pregnant schoolgirl--all students who need additional help. There also are multiple projects for students interested in the fine arts, and vocational education projects for students who otherwise might be on the street looking for a job but who have little to offer a prospective employer in the way of preparation for the world of work.

You're probably saying by this time, "Sure, these are problems we have with our students and they're great ideas--if you have the money or you know your way around Washington and can get federal funding."

I'd like to suggest another way that we have been experimenting with for the past two years. It's called "Sharing Educational Success," and it works in the following manner. A Title III project director who things his program or approach would be helpful to another district asks the state Title III coordinator to take a look. Through national coordination and with the use of a newly revised manual, the program or approach is judged by three criteria: effectiveness, cost, and exportability.

Last year, 107 projects were selected through this process and the National Advisory Council has been feeling the effects ever since. The little red and black brochure that you received has been given wide distribution. As you can see, we invite those who are interested in particular projects to clip the coupon in the back of the booklet

indicating up to five requests for additional information. We then forward the names of the requesters to projects.

The response has been tremendous, strongly indicating that districts are interested in sharing their success stories in order that other districts can benefit from gaining such information.

I'm not saying all problems can be answered in this way, and I'm not trying to say that all the wheels have been invented. I'm only suggesting that cooperation and sharing of information--the raison d'etre of our project of "Sharing Educational Success" --could give educational cooperatives a shot of penicillin where it'll do the most good.

I fully support your efforts to solve your problems through cooperation and through working with your constituents' administrators and particularly with teachers. Leadership sometimes emerges best from the grassroots. As a start, I suggest you ask your teachers what their problems are and where their students need help. At the same time ask them how they would solve the problems they see, if given their head. Then inject what you can learn merely by comparing problems and solutions. This, I suggest, will give cooperatives the "oomph" they need to step forward as leaders.

Your challenge and mine as an agent for change, as an administrator, but most of all as an educator was stated aptly by John Gardner when he said, "Like people and plants, organizations have a life cycle. They have a green and supple youth, a time of flourishing strength, and a gnarled old age....An organization may go from youth to old age in two or three decades, or it may last for centuries."

The challenge is also the opportunity.

GOODBYE YESTERDAY:

ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES

FACING REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES

by

Rowan C. Stutz
Executive Director
NFIRE

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It seems particularly appropriate that this conference on regional educational services sponsored by the National Federation for the Improvement of Rural Education (NFIRE) be held in the very city in which this organization was founded six years ago. As some of you will remember, it was in the Stardust Hotel in 1968 that a small group of neophyte rural education leaders met and formally established NFIRE. Its purpose as agreed upon at that time were: (1) to direct the attention of government agencies, educational associations, institutions of higher learning, state school agencies, professional associations, and others toward the unique problems of rural education; (2) to stimulate research in rural education and related disciplines; (3) to develop innovative ideas for experimental projects and programs designed to improve the quality of rural education; (4) to coordinate the various small school improvement projects throughout the country; (5) to provide training centers for teachers, administrators, researchers, and other school personnel in the unique aspects of service in rural schools; (6) to disseminate information about rural education, identifying needs and describing improvement practices.

When we met here in Las Vegas in 1968, it seemed we were but a small voice in the wilderness. All attention was turned upon the problems of the cities and we were trying to tell them that the problems of the cities had their roots in the country.

We meet here today to advance the improvement of rural education in a climate that in many ways is much more favorable to rural education development than it was six years ago. Since that time, farm to city

p 18 blank

migration has dramatically slowed down. A counter trend of urban to rural migration has begun. Perhaps this is because the rural setting is being looked upon by an increasing number of people as the setting where they can best satisfy personal motives and achieve multiple satisfactions.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that "growing evidence suggests that the migration (to the city) has stopped and perhaps reversed. With new highways and the clean air of the countryside beckoning, more urbanites are moving to smaller towns and commuting to jobs in the cities. Many others are building weekend and vacation homes in rural areas." Smallness, then, has become a valued rather than a disdained characteristic of schools and other social groups.

The Federal government has responded to the unique needs of rural people and small towns through executive and legislative actions: (1) issuance of two Presidential commission reports; (2) passage of the Rural Development Act of 1972 dealing with the major elements of a complete, general purpose, national rural development effort; (3) establishment by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1973 of the position of Assistant Secretary for Human Development with an Office of Rural Development (John Huerta is the director); (4) funding by the National Institute of Education of a significant research and development program; and (5) funding of a Rural-Residential Career Education Model in Glasgow, Montana (1972).

Finally, among those concerned with improving educational opportunities for rural youth, rural cooperatives are increasingly gaining favor as alternatives to school consolidation.

Yes, there have been some significant changes since we met to form a national federation, but the most significant and the one that has brought us together today is the rapidly growing Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) movement. As Bob Stevens pointed out in his paper, nearly half of the 50 states now have a network of bonafide RESA's. And Walt Turner in his survey identified even more explicitly the nature of this movement. The main stimulus for growth has come from the importance placed on supplementary centers by Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that Gerald Kluempke reviewed for us.

However, from the point of view of the consumer, not all of these RESA's are as effective as they need to be. As Don Mrdjenovich pointed out in his paper, presently existing RESA's vary all the way from highly organized centers to the struggling surviving remnants of early Title III ESEA experimental demonstration centers. We critically need a vehicle for coordinating the efforts of educational leaders who have caught a vision of the potential of RESA's for rural school improvement. NFIRE could be such a behicle.

As we search together today and tomorrow for the "best fit elements," we will be examining a number of issues and alternatives. The sectional meetings this morning and again this afternoon provide the structural opportunity to do that. I hope, however, that your sharing of experiences and probing for answers will not be confined to these group sessions.

As your program indicates, the group discussions have been organized around four topics that cover three sets of issues. Group A deals with issues of legislation and finance, Group B with role and role relationship

issues, and Groups C and D with issues related to the development and delivery of services from two different perspectives--the perspective of the consumer and the perspective of the service agency.

A position paper has been prepared under the sponsorship of ERIC/CRESS in Las Cruces, New Mexico for each of these sections. These papers are in your packets. I hope you have had a chance to read them.

Last evening you met the authors. At this time I'd like to commend them and recognize them again: Walter Turner, Robert Stevens, Donald Mrdjenovich, John Uxer.

I found it very interesting that while each of these men bore down effectively on their assigned topic, they also covered the waterfront, so to speak, and dealt with the whole range of issues. Each of the section meetings is repeated three times and each of you can then attend three out of the four and participate in the discussion of three issues presented here. I have therefore suggested that the discussion leaders confine the discussion pretty much to the assigned topic so that the issues dealt with in each sectional meeting will be different enough that we can cover all issues in considerable depth.

Now, let's spend a few minutes in an overview of what seem to be some of the most critical issues facing those who are responsible for developing, organizing, and operating RESA's, and let's pose some of the alternatives available to you for resolving these issues.

In your packets is a worksheet called, "Issues and Alternatives for Developing, Organizing, and Operating Regional Educational Service Agencies." On this worksheet, I have attempted to capture the main issues

that might possibly come up in your discussion and to list some of the alternatives presented in the four papers. I have left a blank space to the right of each sheet where you can record, during the discussions, your perceptions of the "best fit" alternative. If you would be willing to bring these to the Friday morning discussion and hand them in, we'd have some valuable input for the preparation of the conference report. Because these issues will be covered so well in the sectional meetings, let's not spend much time on them here.

As we examine the issues, however, I think I would like to agree with Bob Stevens when he points out in his paper that the central issue that tends to set the tone for the resolution of all the others is the issue of governance:

> This central governance issue, in my judgment, is fundamental to all other questions concerning the organizational, programming, and fiscal aspects of Regional Educational Service Agency arrangements. Indeed, it is the first question that needs to be dealt with by educational and political planners and decision makers. And until a clear consensus is reached on this central point, the debate over the method of establishment, what programs and services and services are to be offered, voluntary versus mandatory participation, fiscal independence or fiscal dependency, and other important issues is meaningless. Some of the best evidence that can be offered that this is true is the organizational dysfunctions of many operating RESA units in numerous states. A close observer of these units would quickly conclude that a principal reason for their present dilemma was the failure, early in the formulation stage, to adequately address this issue or the ready willingness to put it aside for political expediency. This decision has been fatal or near fatal to these units.

We do need to resolve that one and, in so doing, we will have set the stage for resolving many of the others.

There is also another key issue that was alluded to in Bob Stevens' paper when he talked about the "essential governance and organizational requirements of healthy Regional Education Service Agencies," and that is the issue of what kinds of internal structure, management procedures, interpersonal relationships, and decision making provedures are necessary if RESA's are to become vital, healthy organizations that are self-renewing and, perhaps even more importantly, can serve as models for revitalizing existing educational agencies throughout the educational establishment. This issue is listed on the fourth page of the Issues and Alternatives worksheet.

I want to spend a few minutes on this issue because it was not treated extensively in any of the papers, but I hope it will become a significant part of your small group discussions today.

One of the reasons why many of the currently operating RESA's are dysfunctional is that they have been overly influenced by the organiza-ion tional culture of the county units they replaced or the local school districts they serve. If the new RESA's take on too much of the traditions, organizational structures, and standard operating procedures of the traditional educational agencies, they may not be able to fulfill the hopes that many of us have for them. We hope that through these new agencies we might begin to rid the educational establishment of many of its dysfunctions. And so a critical issue is: How can we organize and operate RESA's so that they are healthy, renewing agencies?

John Williamson, now with the National Institute of Education (NIE) has provided a useful model for thinking about renewing organization. He has suggested four levels of organizational inquiry and decision making:

First, he defines the operations level, at which an organization's attention is primarily upon the efficient performance of specified tasks. Analysis and decisions at this level occur daily. Efficiency in performing functions is the main focus of all decision making and management.

The next level is the regulations level, where the attention is upon goal achievement, and operations are evaluated not only in terms of task accomplishment but in terms of goal achievement. Goals are predefined and inquiry is focused upon the analysis of goal achievement, perhaps more on a monthly basis than daily as at the operations level.

Then, there is the learning level at which the organization or agency is inquiring what its goals ought to be. Given a defined mission, the agency asks itself what goals will best suit that mission. At this level or operation, the agency continues its reflection upon goal achievement and seeks to operate efficiently but adds the dimension of goal analysis and goal setting. Engagement in this kind of inquiry need not be too frequent, perhaps several times a year.

The fourth level identified by Williamson is the consciousness level. Agencies functioning at this level are regularly asking whether the work they are engaged in is worth doing and whether they are the best organization to be doing it. The very fact that we are here today is evidence that we are consciously concerned about the goals and functions of RESA's, that we are functi ng at the consciousness level.

When an organization can effectively function at all four levels, it is a renewing organization or has the capability of renewal. However, there is another set of dimensions of organizational analysis that we need to be concerned with that has to do with the health of an agency.

Robert F. Bales, in Personality and Interpersonal Behavior, has given us a 3-dimensional thermometer for measuring the health of an organization regardless of the level of inquiry at which it may be functioning. These three dimensions are: (1) How well are tasks getting accomplished? (2) How is decision making being shared? (3) How do the people in the organization feel about themselves and each other? The balance among these three dimensions is the indicator of the health of the organization.

This conference should seriously consider what structures, what decision making provesses, what staffing patterns, and what operating procedures will enable RESA's to be healthy, renewing organizations. Unless we can do that, these agencies can hardly be expected to become the powerful force for educational reform and renewal that Gerald Kluempke suggested.

Also what is needed is a model for both local school districts and State Education Agencies of the kinds of organizational functioning that will revitalize the whole of the educational establishment. At the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland, Oregon, we are working under an NIE contract to develop such a model. I hope you will join with us in testing it in practice and helping us refine it.

Now, let me call your attention to one other critical concern that is on your handout under Issue #5. In the "D" alternative on this sheet,

I have suggested that RESA's might consider one of their functions to be the strengthening of the Local Education Agencies' problem solving capabilities and the provision of services that support local decision making. This suggests that these agencies should be a force for change rather than a force for maintaining the status quo, that rather than building dependency on the part of districts they serve, RESA's have a deliberate strategy for strengthening the capability of local districts as users of resources both internal and external.

Within educational circles and within noneducational enterprises there is increasing interest in the role of the user. Michael Fullen, after an exhaustive analysis of the process of educational change, concluded that the modal process of change whereby innovations are developed external to schools and then transmitted to them, has led to no significant change at the user level. The evidence continues to suggest that parents, students, teachers, local school boards, and local school administrators must share in initiating and carrying out educational improvements if these changes are to be lasting and effective. If RESA's are to be an effective force for change, they need to give serious attention to strengthening the capacity for problem solving at the user level. Again, under the same contract at the Northwest Lab, we are working to develop some strategies that we hope will help you do this, and we welcome the opportunity to become partners with you in developing the kinds of processes and products that you might find helpful.

"ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES"
WORKSHEETS

Issue 1: What legislative arrangements provide the best statutory underpinnings for RESA's?

Alternatives

A. None. Through leadership and publicity, encourage rural school districts to form cooperatives. The assumption is that the pressures for alternatives to consolidations--from teacher organizations to negotiate salaries and working conditions and from patrons and SEA's to improve educational opportunities--will stimulate cooperatives.

B. Permissive legislation that sets up the machinery and specifies levels of support, authorizes taxing and other legal authority, defines accountability lines, and legitimizes functions. The assumption is that the same incentive in the first alternative will stimulate action but, in addition, that statutory authority and a guaranteed fiscal base are needed.

C. Mandatory legislation that divides the state into regions, specifies the board of control and how it will be elected, mandates that all districts are included (often leaves LEA option to use services selectively), and usually provides state support and/or taxing authority that enables RESA's to be fiscally independent at least for administrative and some standard operating costs.

Notes from Discussion Groups

p 28 blank

Issue 2: How should RESA's be financed?

Alternatives

A. Solely from charges for its services so that it operates as a nonprofit corporation doing business within a defined geographic area; either in competition or not in competition with similar agencies.

B. From state appropriations for basic support, supplemented by charges for services to districts.

C. From state appropriations, supplemented by funds raised by taxing authority.

Notes from Discussion Groups

Issue 3: How should RESA's be governed?

Alternatives	Notes from Discussion Groups
A. By a committee appointed by local boards and/or local superintendents.	
B. By a board elected from and/or by the participating district boards of education.	
C. By a board elected by the registered voters within a defined geographic area.	
D. By a board representing all possible user groups (students, etc.).	

Issue 4: Will RESA's take on the character of the educational establishment's organizational culture (i.e., LEA's, SEA's, and county units), or can they become models of self-renewing organizations?

Alternatives	Notes from Discussion Groups
A. Operational Level The RESA would operate at a routine level of performance providing activities and services which are visible to user or consumer districts.	
B. Level of Regulation The RESA staff would make adjustments in their services, etc., based on feedback from user districts districts that would keep RESA's goals in harmony with user expectations.	
C. Level of Learning The RESA staff would systematically inquire into its own structure and goals and make changes in goals and goal pursuit based on knowledge and information from within and outside itself.	
D. Level of Consciousness The RESA monitors itself in relation to the changing needs of society and works continuously to redefine itself and its role in order to remain a viable organization.	

Issue 5: How should RESA's be staffed?

Alternatives

A. Small, permanent, tenured staff supplemented by flexible, non-tenured staff of program specialists as needed.

B. Task oriented staffing pattern with a wide diversity of skills that allows service teams to be formed in response to constituent requests for services.

C. A staff of "brokers" who enter into contractual arrangements with talented peopie in universities, other districts, etc., in response to a local need.

D. A staff of process facilitators who stimulate user groups and provide problem solving processes.

Notes from Discussion Groups

Issue 6: What should be the relationships among RESA's, LEA's, and SEA's?

Alternatives

A. RESA's are the regional extension of the SEA's, and through RESA's the SEA's carry out all of their regulatory leadership and service functions. Thus, the RESA's enable SEA's to decentralize their functions and perform them closer to the districts they serve.

B. RESA's are the vehicles for cooperative enterprises initiated by LEA's. SEA's continue to deal directly with LEA's.

RESA's should be special district governments whose functions are separate from SEA's and LEA's.

C. RESA's are both the regional extension of SEA's and LEA's cooperatives. Thus, they perform a dual role of carrying out SEA functions within a region as well as setting up and delivering cooperative services.

Notes from Discussion Groups

Issue 7: Should RESA's role be regulatory or service?

Alternatives	Notes from Discussion Groups
A. Regulatory only.	
B. Service only.	
C. Both regulatory and service.	

Issue 8: How are services determined and provided?

Alternatives

A. Operates like a mail order store where customers shop from a list of possible services with the help of RESA staff. When a selection is made that seems to satisfy the customer's need, the RESA staff members procure and facilitate delivery of the service.

B. RESA assesses LEA needs and sets up a program of services based upon this assessment. RESA then entrepreneurs these services and/or delivers them in response to the customer districts' requests for services.

C. RESA works to strengthen the problem solving capability of the districts within its region and responds with services that enable these districts to engage effectively in identifying needs, analyzing alternatives, selecting the "best" one, and carrying out their program decisions.

Notes from Discussion Groups

EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION:

A NATIONAL STUDY OF REGIONAL UNITS

by

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p 37 blank

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INTRODUCTION

During the past several years, Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESA's) have grown in number and service. Yet very little research has been undertaken to determine what these agencies actually do, how they do what they do, and how well they do what they do. What legislation exists in all 50 states? How are the units governed? What type of fiscal support do they have? What programs do they offer? Are they effective?

We in Colorado have been asked these questions many times by our legislature, the State Board of Education, and local school districts. While this paper will not answer all of these questions, it is intended to make a beginning, to answer some of the questions, and to stimulate further research in the name of improved educational cooperation.

COOPERATIVE SERVICE UNITS: AN OVERVIEW

State school systems have three basic organizational patterns: one-echelon, where all control belongs to the State Education Agency (SEA); two-echelon, involving the SEA and the local education agency; and three-echelon, involving the SEA, some intermediate agency, and the local education agency. Only Hawaii has a one-echelon system; 17 states have a two-echelon system; and the remaining 32 states have a three-echelon system.

One-echelon:	Hawaii
Two-echelon:	Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland,

Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia

Three-echelon: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming

Historically, the intermediate agency has been the county, which has performed regulatory and administrative functions for the state. However, in recent years, especially since the mid-1960's, intermediate units in several states have become increasingly service oriented. In some of these states the single county is still the organizational unit; in others, the county unit has been abolished in favor of a new intermediate unit, the RESA.

In addition, many states have developed single and/or multi-purpose regional cooperatives on a voluntary basis. Although these units cannot be classified as intermediate units, their service function is basically the same: to provide services which single districts could not possibly provide on an individual basis. Each of the 32 three-echelon states has some form of regional educational cooperation (See Table 1).

It is important to note that while Table 1 classifies all but four states as having some type of cooperative service unit, total information was not available from all states. It is therefore possible that additional units exist in some states.

TABLE 1

COOPERATIVE SERVICE UNITS

January 1974

	County Unit	Supervisory Union	RESA	Multi-Purpose Cooperative	Single-Purpose Cooperative	No Information
Alabama				X		
Alaska						X
Arizona	X					
Arkansas	X					
California	X					
Colorado	X		X			
Connecticut		X		X		
Delaware					X	
Florida				X	X	
Georgia			X			
Hawaii						X
Idaho				X	X	
Illinois	X				X	
Indiana	X			X	X	
Iowa	X		X		X	
Kansas					X	
Kentucky				X	X	
Louisiana						X
Maine		X				
Maryland				X		
Massachusetts		X			X	
Michigan			X		X	
Minnesota	X				X	
Mississippi	X			X		
Missouri	X			X	X	
Montana	X				X	
Nebraska	X		X			
Nevada					X	
New Hampshire		X				
New Jersey	X			X	X	
New Mexico				X	X	
New York		X	X	X	X	
North Carolina				X	X	
North Dakota	X				X	
Ohio	X			X	X	
Oklahoma	X					
Oregon	X				X	
Pennsylvania			X		X	
Rhode Island						X
South Carolina	X			X		
South Dakota	X					
Tennessee				X	X	
Texas	X		X			
Utah					X	
Vermont		X				
Virginia				X		
Washington			X			
West Virginia			X		X	
Wisconsin			X		X	
Wyoming			X		X	

SOURCE: Compiled from Hooker & Mueller, 1970; Hughes, Achilles, Leonard & Spence, 1971; Stephens, 1973; journal articles; and State Department brochures.

Legislation

In 1965, Federal legislation openly encouraged educational cooperation through the Higher Education Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). That same year, two states (Nebraska and Wisconsin) passed legislation that mandated intermediate units, and four others (Colorado, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) passed legislation enabling increased cooperation between districts. Prior to 1965, only Michigan and New York had active, service-oriented intermediate units (Stephens, 1973: pp. 60-1, 65-6).

As of January 1974, at least 16 states have active RESA's. Six of these operate under legislative mandate: Georgia, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Winconsin. Six operate under enabling legislation: Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, New York, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Four states--California, Illinois, Ohio, and Oregon--have recently strengthened the service role of their county units. Nine additional states have "taken significant action" both with and without legislation. These include Connecticut and members of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC): Alabama, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia (Stephens, 1973: p. 25). Another seven states--Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and South Dakota--have studied the concept of regional cooperation without taking formal action (Stephens, 1973: p. 97). Still another 10 states already have permissive legislation should they decide to form cooperative units (See Table 2).

TABLE 2

LEGISLATION

January 1974

	Mandated (RESA's)	Permissive (RESA's)	Strengthened (County Units)	Permissive (Cooperatives)	No Legislation (Cooperatives)	Legislative Study	Permissive (Inactive)	No Legislation	Negative Legislation	No Information
Alabama					X					
Alaska							X			
Arizona								X		
Arkansas								X		
California			X							
Colorado		X								
Connecticut				X						
Delaware								X		
Florida							X			
Georgia	X									
Hawaii								X		
Idaho						X	X			
Illinois			X							
Indiana							X			
Iowa		X								
Kansas						X		X		
Kentucky				X						
Louisiana							X			
Maine										X
Maryland					X					
Massachusetts *							X			
Michigan		X								
Minnesota						X	X			
Mississippi				X						
Missouri						X			X	
Montana							X			
Nebraska	X									X
Nevada										
New Hampshire *							X			
New Jersey							X			
New Mexico								X		
New York		X								
North Carolina					X					
North Dakota						X	X			
Ohio			X							
Oklahoma						X		X		
Oregon			X							
Pennsylvania	X									X
Rhode Island										
South Carolina					X					
South Dakota						X	X			
Tennessee				X						
Texas	X									
Utah							X			
Vermont *							X			
Virginia					X					
Washington	X									
West Virginia		X								
Wisconsin	X									
Wyoming		X								
	6	6	4	4	5	7	14	7	1	3

* These states operate under a supervisory union.

Recent enacted and attempted legislation indicates a growing interest in either developing new or strengthening existing intermediate units. A report to the 1971 California Legislature ("Intermediate Unit," 1971: p. 2) recommended the abolishment of the county unit in favor of RESA's; a similar bill was submitted to the Iowa Legislature in 1972. That same year, Nebraska introduced a bill that would have all counties included in an educational service unit; and Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, and New York enacted legislation to increase their cooperative capabilities ("1972 Legislation," 1973). In 1973, the New Mexico Legislature tried to pass a bill that would enable service sharing between districts ("School District Reorganization," 1973). And in Ohio, bills to establish educational service districts will be reintroduced to the 1974 legislature (Quick, 1973).

While legislative support for cooperative service units appears to be on the increase, there is no clear indication of the extent to which legislation affects the structure or operation of existing units.

Governance

Regional units are generally governed by a board of control. The method of selecting a board of control varies from state to state. Three commonly used methods include popular election, election by a convention of members of the boards of local school districts, and appointment by the boards of education of local school districts (Stephens, 1973: pp. 60-1, 65-6).

There is also considerable variance in the size of the governing boards, although generally each member school district has at least one representative on the board of control. Some states specify that only one or two members from each participating school district may be elected or appointed. This system could pose problems for units having different size districts. It has been recommended that membership be determined by the size of the district (Hughes et al., 1971: p. 53).

The chief administrator of existing RESA's is appointed by the governing board, and in New York, the administrator must be a state official and approved by the State Board of Education (Stephens, 1973: p. 67).

It is apparent that many RESA's perform some regulatory and administrative functions for the State Department of Education and that regional units in most states have some association with that agency. However, the strength of that relationship differs significantly from state to state (Stephens, 1973: p. 2; Hughes et al., 1071: p. 53).

REGIONAL CENTERS: THE 1974 STUDY

A new study was recently conducted of multipurpose regional centers in 14 states. Incorporating a wide range of responses from different states, to date, 122 out of 389 or 31 percent of the units contacted have responded to some part of the questionnaire.

Areas covered by the questionnaire include population served, geographic distribution, programs and services offered, and fiscal information. While the study did not include all cooperative service units in

all states, it included some information from all of the states with legislative mandates: Georgia, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin; half of the states with active RESA's and permissive legislation: Colorado, Michigan, and New York; three of the four states with strengthened service roles: California, Ohio, and Oregon; and two states with multipurpose cooperatives: Indiana and New Jersey. (Hereafter, this study will be referred to as "the 1974 study.")

Population and Geographic Distribution: Effects on Programming

The 1974 study asked regional centers to state the population (number of students served) and the geographic distribution (metro, urban, rural) of the areas they serve. The questionnaires were divided into four categories according to the number of students served; geographic distribution was then determined for each category:

Students Served	Units Responding	Metro	Urban	Rural
1) under 20,000	53 (44%)	2%	8%	90%
2) 20,000-50,000	32 (26%)	7%	22%	71%
3) 50,000-100,000	22 (18%)	20%	27%	53%
4) over 100,000	14 (11%)	46%	29%	25%
Totals	121 (31%)	12%	18%	70%

As might be expected, as the number of students served increased, the units became increasingly urban and metropolitan and decreasingly rural. However, only when the student population was over 100,000 did the units become primarily metropolitan. Even the third group (50,000 to 100,000) was mostly rural and more urban than metro. Also, of the 14 states studied, centers in only three states--Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania--are more metro than urban.)

Population and Programming

Information regarding operational programs was requested in the following format:

	Product Development	Graphic Production	Planning	Evaluation	In-service Training	Teacher Aid Program	Testing	Information Dissemination	Materials Selection	Demonstration Center	Consultant Service	Mobile Unit Service	Others		
Remedial Reading															
Science															
Environmental Education															
Special Education															
Vocational Education															
Adult Education															
Distributive Education															
Migrant Education															
Art/Humanities															
Bilingual Education															
Early Childhood Education															
Career Education															
Others															

The following programs and services were the most frequently cited by all units in each of the four population categories:

Programs	Services
Special Education	Inservice Training
Remedial Reading	Consultant Services
Career Education	Planning
Vocational Education	Evaluation
	Materials Selection
	Information Dissemination

In all but the lowest population group, Early Childhood Education, Environmental Education, and Science were also frequently cited.

The effect of population on programming can only be seen in the first and last groups, those with the least and the most population. In the first group (under 20,000) approximately half of the units reported only four programs or less. In the fourth group (over 100,000) significantly more programs were offered through more services. Even though only 14 units are included in this latter group, every category of programs and services was checked, most of them by at least half of the responding units.

Geographic Distribution and Programming

Samples of units that are predominantly (50 percent or better) rural, urban, or metropolitan were studied to determine if geographic distribution affects programming. The study revealed that all programs and services are available in some center in each of the three geographic divisions. Rural units reported 50 percent or better participation in

four programs and six services. Urban units reported better than 50 percent participation in five programs and eight services. Metropolitan units reported 100 percent participation in three programs and six services and better than 50 percent participation in all but two programs and five services.

These figures do not indicate radical program differences based on geographic distribution. However, program participation does increase some from rural to urban to metropolitan areas; and this increase relates directly to the increase of student population. In other words, there appears to be a direct correlation between population, geographic distribution, and programming. The smaller units, which are generally rural, have fewer operational programs; the larger units, which are generally urban to metro, have larger programs. (It should be noted that this study provided a limited sample of urban and metro units.)

Financial Structure of Selected RESA's

While it has been generally known that RESA's receive monies from a combination of local, state, and Federal sources, the 1974 study provides a clearer picture of the financing pattern in 11 states: Colorado, California, Georgia, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. One hundred and eight regional cooperative units, representing 29 percent of the possible responses from these states, provided fiscal information for the study. It is important to stress that this analysis of funding is only representative of the

responding regional centers and may not provide an accurate profile of some states. State responses varied from 17 percent to 69 percent. (See Table 3).

Federal Support

This survey makes it immediately apparent that units in these 11 states receive limited Federal funds. Only one state, Colorado (57 percent response), receives more than one-third of its support from Federal programs. This includes three Boards of Cooperative Services that receive at least 50 percent of their total support from Federal monies. Two other states, Texas and Washington (40 percent and 29 percent responding), receive between 20 and 30 percent of their total support from Federal funds. The remaining eight states indicated that less than 15 percent of their budgets come from Federal programs. Only four of these 108 RESA units receive more than 50 percent Federal funds. While ESEA Titles I and II supply some of these monies, Titles III and VI were more frequently cited as the primary source of Federal funds. Federal funds account for 12 percent of the total support of the 11 states.

State Support

Eight of the 11 states reported that over one-third of their total funding came from state sources. States operating under legislative mandate generally receive most of their funds from the state: Georgia and Pennsylvania receive over half; Texas and Wisconsin receive 45 percent; Washington is an exception, receiving most of its monies from

local--including county--sources. Only one state, Oregon, reported almost no (8 percent) state support. State funds account for 43 percent of the total support of the 108 RESA's, just 1 percent less than what local districts supply.

Local Support

Funds from local sources include both direct support and contract services from member districts and, for four states--Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington--include tax revenues and county funds as local sources. Oregon (17 percent response) is the only state that receives nearly all (91 percent) of its support from local sources. New York is the only other state to report a total of more than 50 percent local funding. However, six more states--California, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Washington, and Wisconsin--receive more than one-third of their total support from local sources. Local funds account for 44 percent of the total support of the 108 RESA's with direct support slightly more common than service contracts. Local school districts require an annual budget review in New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin (Stephens, 1973: pp. 61, 66).

Taxation and Property Titles

Michigan, Ohio, and Oregon can levy taxes to support cooperative ventures. RESA's in Iowa, Nebraska, and West Virginia, and educational cooperatives in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Tennessee also have tax levying powers. Educational cooperatives in Colorado, Nebraska, New York, Pennslyvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming may hold title to real property.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Information has been gathered, charts have been developed, and trends have been defined. Patterns of legislating, governing, financing, and programming Regional Educational Service Agencies can now be more clearly seen and understood. This information is valuable, but it does not go far enough. While it is relatively easy to determine quantity, it is far more difficult to determine quality. Now it is time to ask the crucial question: "DOES EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION REALLY WORK?"

While evaluative studies have been conducted in a number of individual centers in several states, it is clear that there are few vehicles for sharing such studies with other centers in other states. Therefore the following recommendations are submitted:

1. That comprehensive needs assessments be conducted by the cooperative service units in all of their member school districts
2. That new programs be explored and/or developed based on conclusions derived from the needs assessment
3. That every center conduct on-going evaluations of operational programs and services to insure that assessed needs are being met
4. That programs not meeting assessed needs be improved or terminated per recommendation of the evaluation team
5. That training programs be developed and conducted for personnel in member school districts for the purposes of furthering knowledge and use of available resources
6. That continuing efforts be made to determine and improve the overall effectiveness of cooperative service agencies

7. That a national communication system or clearinghouse be developed for the express purpose of disseminating such information to all interested persons.

These recommendations are submitted in the hope that increased communication and sharing will enable the development of the best possible educational programs for all children.

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THE GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION OF REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES: ARMS OF THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY, PURE CREATURES OF CONSTITUENT LOCAL DISTRICTS, OR PURE SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS?

by

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p 56 blank

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1960's, the substate Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) concept has been seriously examined in approximately three-fourths of the states as an alternative for the improvement of local school district educational delivery systems. In a substantial majority of these instances, the concept has been implemented. That is, in the past approximate decade, in nearly one-half of the 50 states there has been established either a statewide network of bona fide RESA's or a partial statewide network. In many of these cases, the regional educational service unit was restructured from a former middle echelon unit, most typically the county school system. Thus, the concept in many important ways is one of the biggest movements in school government in this nation at the present time (Stephens, 1973).

This paper will not examine the major precipitating causes for the widespread interest in the concept, the method of establishment and development in the several states which have implemented it, or the major programming, staffing, and fiscal arrangements of Regional Educational Service Agency operation. Nor will it treat in a direct way the prior question of whether or not a state should in fact have some form of regional service unit or three-level structure. Rather, my charge is to focus on one of the most critical and complex aspects of the concept --that is, should RESA's be an arm of the State Education Agency (SEA), pure creatures of constituent local school districts, or pure special district governments? This charge assumes that in most state school

p 58 blank

systems a need does exist for a form of school government setting between the state education agency and collections of local school districts.

This central governance issue, in my judgment, is fundamental to all other questions concerning the organizational, programming, and fiscal aspects of Regional Educational Service Agency arrangements. Indeed, it is the first question that needs to be dealt with by educational and political planners and decision makers. And until a clear consensus is reached on this central point, the debate over the method of establishment, what programs and services are to be offered, voluntary versus mandatory participation, fiscal independence or fiscal dependency, and other important issues is meaningless. Some of the best evidence that can be offered that this is true is the organizational dysfunctions of many operating RESA units in numerous states. A close observer of these units would quickly conclude that a principal reason for their present dilemma was the failure, early in the formulation stage, to adequately address this issue or the ready willingness to put it aside for political expediency. This decision has been fatal or near fatal to these units.

This paper will address the issue by first briefly establishing the critical dimensions of the issue as I perceive these to be, then highlighting the major potential points of conflict, and concluding with a proposed solution to the issue and the identification of its major advantages. It will be noted that the central thesis of this paper is that a structurally sound and healthy RESA can and should represent the interests of both masters--the SEA and constituent local school districts. That is, in most state school systems it can be both an important but

highly selective link in the operation of the regulatory arrangements which must be maintained in a state school system and can simultaneously provide essential programs and services of high quality to member local school districts in the consortia in a nonthreatening way. Furthermore, it will be argued that the interface between the two roles, regulatory and service, is essential in many important ways for all three parties in the act--the SEA, the local school district, and the RESA. Moreover, the state school system will prosper in many obvious and highly potential ways because of the interface.

ESTABLISHING THE CRITICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE ISSUE

What are the pervasive, dominant considerations that educational and political planners and decision makers must keep in mind in seeking solutions to the complex issue of the optimal governance and organizational affiliation of RESA's? In my judgment, the major parameters of the issue have to do with the following: What are the principal needs of healthy state systems of elementary-secondary education? What is to be the role and function of SEA's in the resolution of the principal needs of state systems of elementary-secondary education? What are the principal considerations of one of the chief consumers, the local school districts, in entering into and maintaining a workable relationship with an external service agency of whatever type--a creature of its own making, a pure special district government, or the SEA? What are the essential governance and organizational requirements of healthy RESA's?

Time and space constraints preclude a detailed discussion of these four clusters of considerations and I will therefore necessarily limit my remarks to a brief overview of each. Even without these constraints the search for answers to these questions or other similar questions is hindered by a number of conceptual and methodological problems. And, as I am certain you will recognize, answers to these questions might vary significantly from one state school system to another. Nonetheless, let me briefly attempt to discuss them. And I will further limit my comments in each of the four clusters of considerations to the consensus views found in the literature which are of most significance to the topic of this paper.

The Principal Needs of Healthy State Systems of Elementary-Secondary Education

In recognition of the need to look first at the total state school system rather than pieces of that system, whatever its configuration, I would like to focus first on this topic. Statements about the needs of state systems of elementary-secondary education have multiplied considerably in recent years. The literature is abundant with profiles of educational needs in each of the 50 states and with statements of needs applicable generally to the status of elementary-secondary education in all of the states.

While the terminology and mode of expression varies from one statement to the next, a student of school government quickly detects repeated reference to the following unranked, common needs which are of particular importance to the topic of this paper: the need to equalize and extend

educational opportunities for all children and youth in the state system of education; the need to successfully implement the "new technology" in educational processes; the need to improve the quality of educational practice; the need to equalize the financial costs of education; the need to develop, test, and implement a more relevant curriculum; the need to invest substantial resources in the training and retraining of educational personnel; the need for a sophisticated dissemination network to announce and hasten the implementation of effective educational practice; the need to establish a valid research, development, and evaluation network; the need to administer and deliver educational programs and services in the most efficient and effective manner possible to reflect sound cost-benefit/cost-effectiveness principles; the need to develop new mechanisms to promote a healthy interface at all levels among the units of school government and among school government, general government, and the private sector; the need to establish a viable structure of school government as an important prerequisite for the development and maintenance of a sound state system of education; and the need to develop meaningful long-range planning and technical capabilities.

The Role and Function of State Education Agencies

As was true of the first cluster of considerations, the second--the role and function of State Education Agencies in the resolution of the principal needs of state systems of elementary and secondary education--has also been the subject of an increasing volume of pronouncements.

A review of some of the best of the literature on both the historical posture (Campbell, Cunningham, and McPhee, 1965; Layton, 1967; Collins, 1969; Harris, 1973) and emerging trends of SEA's (Campbell and Sroufe, 1967; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1968; Hansen and Morphet, 1968) suggests that there is a consensus that the states ought to assume as their primary missions the following functions: the provision of long-range planning, research and development, and evaluation; the identification of educational needs; the provision of leadership in communicating educational problems and recommended solutions to the legislative and executive branches of state government and to the public; the provision of statewide communicative and coordinative networks; the development of programs and procedures for the equitable financing of education; the development of performance standards and a companion regulatory framework for the optimal operation of educational delivery systems; and the concentration of the leadership mission for statewide planning and development.

The Primary Needs of the Local School District

The third cluster of considerations, the needs and interests of one of the ultimate consumers of the external service agency activities, the local school district, must also be dominant in the debate over structural configurations. A review of the available literature of this critical dimension of the issue suggests that the following concerns are uppermost in the perceptions of local school district officials: the provision of external efforts that are based on the needs of local districts; the

provision of external efforts that complement and support the activities of the local district and are not in competition with, or duplicate the activities of, the local unit; the provision of external efforts of high quality in staffing and programming; the provision of external efforts that are definite, reliable, and accessible; the provision of external efforts that are sensitive to the recognizable varying environments under which the local school district must function; and the provision of mechanisms that make possible the substantial involvement of the local unit in the planning and decision-making processes of the external service unit.

The Essential Governance and Organizational Requirements of Service Units

Effective service units also have need for carefully arranged governance and organizational configurations. There appears to be a substantial consensus in the literature on RESA's and on special district governments concerning the following aspects that are important to the topic of this paper: SEA's should have sole authority to approve the establishment of service units and develop rules, regulations, and standards for their operation; service units should be governed by a popularly elected board having a degree of flexibility and authority to develop its own rules and regulations, subject to the policies of the SEA, and statutory and constitutional considerations; service units should enjoy significant fiscal independence and fiscal integrity; the basic programming orientation of service units should be the provision

of programs and services to constituent local school districts; service units should not engage in the enforcement of rules and regulations of the SEA; service units should be authorized to offer any program or service to constituent local units, subject to the approval of the SEA; all constituent local school districts should be eligible for the programs and services of the service unit, but participation should be on a voluntary basis; service units should be accessible to their constituency; service units should be accountable to their constituency; service units should possess unmatched staffing and programming capabilities; and service units should be legitimate members of the state system of education, that is, they must be viewed as a public corporation possessing all the legal trappings of a public body.

Summary

These, then, are some of the critical dimensions of the issue as I perceive them to be. I have not thus far considered in a direct way other important aspects of the problem such as the optimal arrangements for the allocation of functions in a state system of education or the identification of assumptions about the future, although these two matters in particular will be at least referred to in later sections of the paper.

THE MAJOR POTENTIAL POINTS OF CONFLICT

In the establishment of an effective system for the provision of programs and services to local school districts, planners and decision-makers must be sensitive to and accommodate the following unranked potential conflicting needs and requirements, stated in question form.

1. Will the provision of supplementary programs and services to marginal and inneffective local school districts contribute to the perpetuation of such units, thus retarding the establishment of a sound structural system of education within the state school system?
2. Can service units be provided a high degree of fiscal independence, as recommended in the literature, and still maintain a position of noncompetitiveness to constituent units and/or, perhaps more importantly, engage in only those activities deemed important by the member units?
3. How can service units intervene in the working of constituent local districts, having known deficiencies in a nonthreatening way if--as the literature suggests--participation is to be voluntary?
4. Would not another unit of government sitting between the local district and the SEA inhibit rather than promote the desired vertical and horizontal communication and coordination in the state system?
5. How can local districts have substantial and meaningful input into the workings of the service unit--as opted for overwhelmingly in the literature--if the activities of the latter are subject to review by the SEA, as also recommended in the literature? Furthermore, how can external service agents be accountable to constituent districts under such arrangements?

The above questions are representative of the complexities, competing needs, and dilemmas briefly illustrated in the enumeration of the

principal needs of a state system of education, the emerging role and function of state education agencies, the primary concerns of the local school district, and acceptable governance and organizational standards of service units alluded to previously.

A PROPOSED SOLUTION TO THE DILEMMA

I would now like to propose a solution to the issue which, in my judgment, pays attention to and reconciles a majority of the considerations previously outlined, particularly the most central ones. The solution is in the form of a model service unit. And I want to emphasize that in my judgment the proposed model is appropriate for implementation in a vast majority of state school systems in this nation as is, following the RESA concept. After presenting the profile of the model, a brief discussion will be presented highlighting the major benefits of the proposal for each of the three parties in the proposed arrangements.

Major Features of the Proposed Model

I want now to move to the presentation of a profile of the model. To be emphasized in the profile are the following: establishment provisions, highlights of the governance and organizational aspects of the model, its major financial bases, its major programs and services, and the essential features of the regulatory mission of the proposed units. In many ways, this is an arbitrary classification scheme and it should be emphasized that there is a clear interdependence between the five categories utilized here.

Establishment

A statewide network of regional units is to be established by statute, preferably mandatory, rather than by administrative regulation passed by the SEA. This preferred legislative endorsement should follow the completion and full display of a comprehensive statewide study which would highlight the existing and projected needs of the total state school system and the existing and projected problems, limitations, and constraints of the present operating units of school government. All local school districts in the state must be members of the regional unit, although participation in the programs and services of the unit is not required for the optional programs offered by the unit.

The governing board of the SEA is to be granted final approval authority to organize the establishment of the regional units. In this activity, the state board would utilize detailed minimal and optimal criteria which reflect the important considerations of total student enrollment, financial resource capabilities, and geographic area peculiar to the state. Local school district boundaries and not county political lines or other artificial boundaries should be utilized as the building blocks for the service unit. Moreover, the boundaries of the regional units should adhere closely to those of other established or planned public substate regional planning, economic development, and/or other programming units subject to the previously established minimal and/or optimal criteria for the enrollment and financial resource base of the educational service unit.

The SEA is to be granted specific legislative or, at a minimum, specific policy authorization to develop departmental rules and regulations for the administration and operation of the service units. Furthermore, the SEA should be charged with the responsibility to conduct regular comprehensive reviews of the operations of the regional units.

Governance and Organization

In the proposed model, the regional units would be governed by a popularly elected board having authority to develop its own rules and regulations, subject to the policies of the board of the SEA and/or the SEA and statutory and constitutional considerations. The governing board is empowered to appoint its chief administrative officer and upon his recommendation, approve the appointment of other staff members.

Of most importance to the delicate check and balance system built into the model which is being briefly portrayed here, the governing board of the regional unit is required by statute to establish a general advisory committee composed of one elected representative from each constituent local school district governing board and the chief administrative official of each constituent local school district. This advisory group is granted statutory authority to approve certain provisions of the budget of the regional unit. Authorization to appoint other advisory groups composed of representatives of local school districts and other important publics of the regional unit is encouraged by statute.

Financial Structure

In the proposed model, the governing board of the regional service units is granted limited authority to levy taxes. The degree of limited

taxing authority would of course depend on a whole set of variables present in a state, such as the percent of state aid to local districts and dependency on the local property tax. The units are able to make application for and expend federal aid, and receive and expend gifts and grants, all subject to approval of the SEA. Of importance, they are eligible for and should receive substantial state aid on an equalization basis, particularly for the performance of administrative functions for the SEA, and for the implementation of state-decreed programs and services which are placed under their sole responsibility or for those where they share responsibility with other units of school government.

Earlier, it was established that the model calls for a general advisory committee mandated by statute, composed of one elected representative from each constituent local school district and the chief administrative official of each district, that would be granted statutory authority to approve certain provisions of the budget of the regional unit. In that the budgetary act, particularly its planning, implementation and review aspects, is so vital to the delicate check and balance scheme being opted for in the model, a few additional comments about this central feature are offered.

In the proposed model, the annual budget of the regional unit can be divided into three distinct categories, as shown in Table 1. The SEA would provide the entire source of funding and thus hold final review authority for the regulatory functions performed for it by the regional unit and the administrative costs of programs required of all districts. It would also provide some of the funding for experimental programs and

TABLE 1

THE SOURCE OF FINANCING AND REQUIRED APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL COSTS OF THE VARIOUS TYPES OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF RESA UNITS

Type of Programs and Services	Sources of Financing	Required Approval
Regulatory Functions		
1. Administrative costs	SEA	SEA
2. Operational costs	SEA	SEA
Programs and Services		
1. Required of all districts		
• Administrative costs	SEA	SEA
• Operational costs	SEA and Local tax	SEA
2. Optional for all districts		
• Administrative costs	Local tax	RESA general advisory committee
• Operational costs	Contract with LEA	RESA general advisory committee
3. Experimental programs for the SEA		
• Administrative costs	SEA	SEA and RESA general advisory committee
• Operational costs	SEA	SEA and RESA general advisory committee
Administration of the RESA	SEA	SEA and RESA general advisory committee

the administrative costs of the regional unit. The general advisory committee of the regional unit would be the budgetary approving unit for optional programs provided to local districts and share this responsibility with the SEA with regard to experimental programs and administrative costs of the regional unit.

Regional units would also be required to develop three-year planning budgets. In addition to the many values of this requirement, this time frame is essential for the optimum review and necessary coordination of the budgetary processes outlined in Table 1. It also would contribute substantially to the utilization of program budgeting principles by the regional unit as well as the SEA and the local school districts.

Programs and Services

In the proposed model the basic programming orientation of regional service units should be in the provision of programs and services to their constituent local schools, all of whom should be eligible for participation. The governing board of the service unit is authorized to offer any program needed by constituent districts, subject to approval of the SEA.

Furthermore, the governing board, with approval of the SEA, should be empowered to enter into intergovernmental contracts and agreements with other public, quasi-public, and private agencies for the provision of programs and services including joint staffing arrangements and joint use of physical facilities and equipment. This intergovernmental capability is vital to the workings of the RESA. Therefore, this authority is explicitly authorized in the legislative framework governing these units.

Regulatory Functions for the SEA

As established early in this paper, it is my contention that viable RESA's in most state school systems where they operate or potentially

could operate can and should serve as an important, but highly selective, link in the operation of the regulatory arrangements that must be maintained in a state school system. It was further argued that the interface between the two roles, regulatory and service, is essential to all three parties in the act--the SEA, the local school district, and the RESA.

Before developing this point further, it should be noted that most of the literature on regionalism in education is either silent on the regulatory-service quandary, addresses the issue only in a peripheral sense, or clearly takes the position that the two roles should not be mixed. One of the first writers in the field to speak to the issue and opt for the position that the two roles ought to be mixed was Rhodes (1963), who assumed that middle echelon units would perform regulatory functions:

> The intermediate unit localized state school administrative operation, particularly in respect to those routines of a ministerial or "housekeeping" nature. At the same time, it represents and interprets local education needs at the state level. Through these liaison functions it gives vertical articulation to the state system of public education. (p. 5)

Most recently, a comprehensive study of education in New York State completed last year (The Fleischman Report, 1973) recommended that the existing Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) be utilized extensively in the performance of certain functions formerly centralized in the SEA in Albany.

In an earlier paper on the RESA concept, this writer stated in unequivocal terms that these units should "perform a number of regulatory

and ministerial functions for the State Education Agency" and that by so doing they would serve in a "vital role in the vertical and horizontal development and implementation of statewide educational planning and administration of the state school system" (Stephens, 1967: p. 12). Numerous illustrations of how this could be accomplished were subsequently identified. This statement was made approximately six years ago when I first became associated with the concept. Now, after a relatively intense exposure to the concept and its use in a large number of states, I make the claim with even greater conviction.

It should also be noted that while few writings have been offered expressly arguing for the assumption of regulatory functions as one of the main missions of regional service units, a large percentage of service units in the several states having them carry out extensive functions of a regulatory nature for the SEA. This is especially prevalent in states where ministerial functions long performed by a middle echelon unit of school government have been transferred to a restructured unit, whatever it might be called. It is not clear in all cases whether or not this transferring of functions was a deliberate and conscientious act or was a necessity due to the unavailability of other arrangements for picking up the slack.

One additional point should be emphasized before offering some hopefully useful illustrations of how the two roles can be mixed: it is essential that the enabling legislation covering regional unit operations clearly establishes that these units are to perform regulatory and ministerial functions. The legitimization of these services is absolutely

necessary for the effective performance of this mix, as will be established subsequently.

SOME SPECIFICS ON THE SERVICE-REGULATORY MIX

It is my strong recommendation that the regulatory functions performed by RESA's be limited to the provision of carefully identified and rigorously protected aspects of the regulatory processes. Broadly stated, this recommendation suggests that the regional unit should be involved in the vertical and horizontal planning aspects of the development of regulatory provisions, and the vertical and horizontal communicative aspects of the implementation of regulatory provisions. Further, its role is essentially one of data gathering and analysis and the provision of other supportive roles.

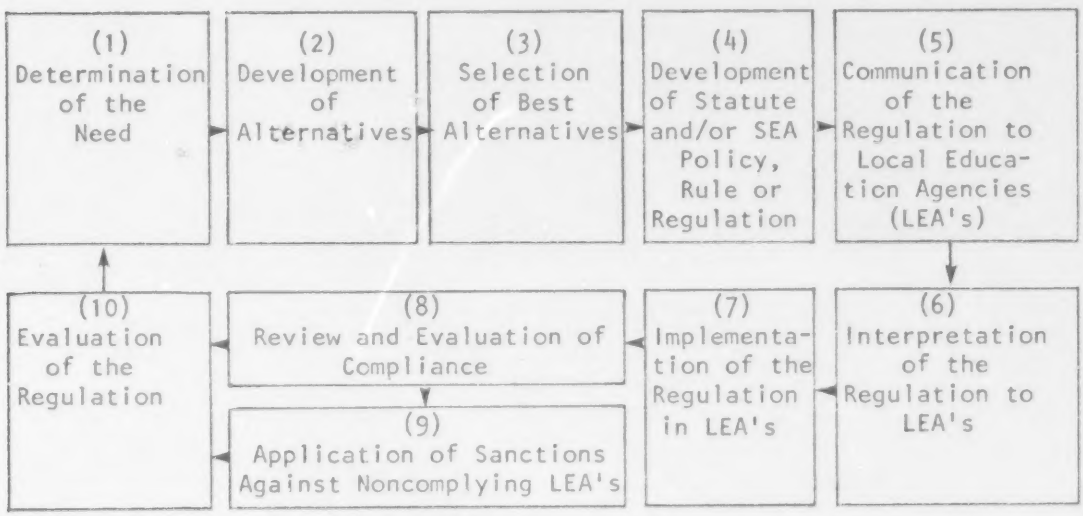
At this time I would like to operationalize this broadly stated recommendation. In attempting to do this I want to first focus on a suggested scheme for looking at the elements and possible division of effort of state regulatory functions, then highlight what I regard as a workable allocation of primary and secondary responsibility for the performance of each element among the three units of school government proposed in the model--the SEA, the local school district, and the RESA, particularly the latter--and then offer several illustrations of how the scheme might work.

Elements of State Regulatory Functions

A major premise made in this proposal advocating a mix between the regulatory-service functions is that there are a number of basic elements and/or activities associated with a vast majority of state school system regulatory arrangements. Figure 1 identifies one useful profile of these elements for use here. The figure suggests that most regulatory processes can be categorized into 10 typically sequential activities.

FIGURE 1

A SCHEME FOR IDENTIFYING THE SEQUENTIAL ELEMENTS OF STATE REGULATORY FUNCTIONS


(1) Determination of the Need
(2) Development of Alternatives
(3) Selection of Best Alternatives
(4) Development of Statute and/or SEA Policy, Rule or Regulation
(5) Communication of the Regulation to Local Education Agencies (LEA's)
(6) Interpretation of the Regulation to LEA's
(7) Implementation of the Regulation in LEA's
(8) Review and Evaluation of Compliance
(9) Application of Sanctions Against Noncomplying LEA's
(10) Evaluation of the Regulation

A Possible Allocation of Effort

Two other major premises are made throughout this paper. One is that most educational processes, regulatory and otherwise, are divisible and that there exists a clear and highly visible division of effort for

a vast majority of the regulatory functions of a state school system. That is, while the state has the primary constitutional and/or statutory responsibility for education within the state, it can, presently does, philosophically should continue, and in many cases, must for very practical reasons delegate these responsibilities to other legally chartered units in the system.

Utilizing Figure 1, it would appear highly beneficial for the state to assign RESA's a major primary, and/or a major secondary, responsibility jointly with the SEA and/or local education agencies for 9 of the 10 elements identified. That is, with the exception of activity #9, the application of sanctions against noncomplying local school districts which must legally and operationally remain the sole prerogative of the SEA, RESA's can serve in important lead and/or supportive roles to either the SEA or the local school districts. Especially promising would be the substantial involvement of the regional unit in the determination of need (activity #1), the development of alternatives (activity #2), the communication (activity #5), interpretation (activity #6), and implementation (activity #7) of the regulation in the local school districts served by the regional unit, and evaluation of the regulation (activity #10) based on the service agency's close observation and study of its use, typically in diverse settings.

Illustrative Examples of the Role of the Regional Educational Service Agency in the Performance of Regulatory Functions

I want now to cite specific examples of how a viable and healthy RESA can play an important role in the performance of the regulatory

system in operation in a state system of education. An attempt is made to use illustrations of regulatory provisions found in a majority of states at present or potentially to be considered by a majority of states in the future. And, finally, the examples cited illustrate the main thesis of this paper--that is, a carefully packaged service-regulatory mix is a terribly important objective for all three parties in the arrangement.

The following six major clusters of activities highlight the potential of a meaningful service-regulatory interface:

1. The provision of consultative and technical assistance to local school districts in the development and preparation by local officials of required reports on the fiscal management, educational program, staffing and students, transportation, lunch, and other supportive services provided by the district, and the collection, verification, and preliminary analysis of these reports for the SEA
2. The provision of consultative, technical, and legal assistance to local school districts in the development and preparation by local officials of required physical facility utilization and/or construction programs and the verification and preliminary analysis of these activities for the SEA
3. The provision of consultative and supporting services to local school districts in the development, implementation, and evaluation by local officials of required school health programs and services, or the direct operation by the regional unit of these required activities where the local unit cannot justify their provision

4. The provision of consultative and supporting services to local school districts in the development, implementation, and evaluation by local officials of required programs and services for exceptional children, or the direct operation by the regional unit of these required programs where the local unit cannot support their offering

5. The completion of required local school district existing and projected demographic profiles required for long-range fiscal, educational, staffing, student, and physical facility planning and accountability schemes

6. Most importantly, the provision of consultative and supporting services to local school districts in the development, implementation, and evaluation by local officials of required instructional programs and services, or the direct provision by the regional unit of these required educational experiences when the local unit cannot efficiently or economically support their offering.

In addition to the above major clusters of activities, RESA's can also play a vital role in the performance of other frequently required single purpose activities such as the completion of required local school district census projects, the completion of required local district dropout and attrition studies, the management of required local school bus inspections, the approval of school bus transportation routes, the management of compulsory attendance laws, the approval of local school

district reorganization proposals, the monitoring of teacher certification processes, and the management and apportionment of state appropriations to local districts.

MAJOR ADVANTAGES OF THE PROPOSED MODEL

In my judgment, the proposed model has a large number of advantages for the SEA, the local school district, the well-being of the RESA, and the state school system in general. I would like now to briefly enumerate some of the more significant benefits as I perceive them to be. In so doing, I will regularly attempt to reinforce a number of central advantages as I further perceive them.

Major Benefits for the State Education Agency

The model has these known and/or highly potential major benefits for the SEA in most state school systems:

1. The proposal frees the SEA from diluting precious and increasingly scarce fiscal and human resources for the operation of necessary programs and services in situations where this is now true or in cases where the SEA is not presently operating programs but senses a compelling need to do so.
2. The proposal frees the SEA to better perform one of its widely recognized primary missions, the companion functions of providing long-range educational planning, identifying of the really big issues in education, and communicating these needs and their

possible solution to its numerous publics by establishing far more elaborate communicative and coordinative networks than are presently available in many states.

3. The proposal will permit the SEA to substantially improve on virtually all of the elements of its increasingly necessary regulatory arrangements.

4. The proposed requirement that the SEA board be authorized to approve the number of service units in the state better insures that the units that are established are based on carefully developed criteria peculiar to the state, thus minimizing the establishment of marginal or deficient units.

5. The proposed requirement that the SEA have authority to develop policies governing virtually all aspects of the operation of regional units provides the state with a meaningful and visible leadership role, on the one hand, and an equally critical intervention mechanism on the other hand.

Major Benefits for the Local School District

The proposed model has these known and/or highly potential major benefits for one of the principal consumers of RESA operations--the local school district:

1. It will make possible the provision of easily accessible and definite supplemental and supportive services of high quality to its own self-determined programming activities.

2. It will facilitate the development of required programs and services and in fact provide these in the event there is a clear inability of the local school district to do so.
3. It will provide a mechanism for the direct and immediate control by local school districts of those aspects of regional unit operations most important to it.
4. It will provide numerous opportunities for meaningful local district involvement in statewide and regional planning and decision-making processes.
5. It will promote and protect a viable state-local partnership concept in education which, despite many glaring weaknesses and well-documented limitations in many situations, has nonetheless served this nation admirably in many important ways and needs to be preserved.

Major Benefits for the Regional Unit

The proposed model also has built into it a number of important features for the promotion of a healthy RESA. Chief among these are the following known and/or highly potential benefits:

1. The proposal would make the regional unit directly accountable to its two masters, the SEA and its constituent local school districts, as it must be.
2. The recommended degree of fiscal independence would provide the unit with a definite and reliable fiscal support base to promote

the provision of high quality and sophisticated programs and services and the deployment of staff expertise unmatched by its constituency.

3. The proposed performance of certain regulatory functions for the SEA would give additional justification for the allocation of resources to the unit. This also would contribute to the development of high quality programs and services, in addition to lessening financial competition with its constituent local districts.

4. The proposed performance of certain regulatory functions for the SEA would also contribute to the image of the regional unit as a legitimate member of the state school system.

5. The proposal would provide the service unit with a desired degree of autonomy from the SEA, thus permitting it to respond in meaningful ways to the expressed needs of its consumers.

Other Benefits for the State School System

The model has these additional known and/or highly potential benefits for the state school system beyond those implied in the previous listings:

1. It will contribute substantially to the equalization of educational opportunities for all children and youth by minimizing the accident of geography as an important determinant of the kind of educational programs available to them.

2. It will contribute substantially to the improvement of the quality of many educational programs and services in operation in the state system.
3. It will contribute to the development of a viable structure of school government in the state.
4. It will promote the better utilization of known, and/or force a systematic search for new, cost-benefit/cost-effectiveness principles in the delivery of educational programs and services within the state school system.
5. It will promote the interface of education and general government and the private sector by removing many legal and artificial constraints which inhibit joint planning, coordination, and cooperation.
6. It will contribute to the healthy interface between urban, suburban, and rural interests as they seek to solve areawide educational and educationally related issues, where this is appropriate and feasible.
7. It will contribute to the development of a statewide research, development, and evaluation network in the state and promote the concentration of resources to foster the network once it is in place.
8. It will contribute to the establishment of a statewide network of resident change agents possessing the legal mandate, where necessary, and the staffing expertise and resources to effect fundamental change in the workings of the state school system on a regular and planned basis.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I want to conclude these remarks by emphasizing that the proposed solution to the complex question of the governance and organizational affiliation of RESA's is comprised of many interlocking aspects designed to establish a delicate check and balance system that is open, visible, and accountable to each of the three major parties in the act. It resembles what Commissioner Nyquist of New York State, in a recent speech called a "calculated interdependence" (1972: p. 7).

Whatever its proper title, the proposed model addresses and resolves in a reasonable fashion most of the frequently competing considerations of the SEA, the local school district, and the RESA. And, most importantly, it has as its primary focus the promotion of the welfare of the total state school system, the ultimate test of any proposed scheme.

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REGIONAL SERVICE CENTERS - A CONSUMER'S VIEWPOINT

by

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p 86 blank

INTRODUCTION

In the world of marketing, the successful merchandiser is one who has either accurately predicted the needs of the consumers or who has developed a product first and then convinced consumers that they would benefit from using his new product. A comprehensive marketing firm is usually found to be engaged in both aspects--predicting consumer needs and developing products to meet them and also developing new products first and then creating a market for them. In the first case, the merchandiser must be aware of the needs of the consumers. In the second case, he develops an awareness in the consumers.

Cooperative and regional educational service centers are confronted with similar market dimensions, for they are "merchandisers" of educational services and their success and continued existence depends upon their ability to satisfy consumers.

It is hoped that this consumer's viewpoint will be of some use to those who manage cooperative educational enterprises. If this paper helps to make them more aware of the needs of those who utilize their services, then both will benefit. It is also hoped that this paper will help to create an increased awareness on the part of consumers regarding the potential of cooperative and regional educational service centers for meeting their identified needs.

The need for current "market research" involving cooperative and regional educational service agencies and those who are the "consumers" of such services was supported by a comprehensive review of the literature conducted by the writer and Mr. Roy Tally, director of WIRE (Wisconsin

p 90 Mark

Information Retrieval for Education). It would appear that those who provide cooperative educational services have a paucity of "market research" to aid them in becoming more aware of consumer needs. One might also conclude that the cooperative and regional service centers ought to become more aggressive "advertisers" if they hope to develop a greater awareness of the services they have to offer.

PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this paper to examine cooperative and regional educational service agencies from the viewpoint of the consumer. It is the assumption of the writer that most interested parties are aware of the existence of cooperative efforts among school districts. Shared teachers, group bidding, computerized scheduling services, specialized pupil personnel services, Federal programs coordination, payroll and bookkeeping services, data processing services, regional media centers, joint equipment purchases and use--the list is endless, restricted only by legislation and man's creativity and ingenuity. It can be said with a high degree of confidence that the consumer has a sizable and growing catalog of existing and potential cooperative services at his disposal.

However, because of the previously mentioned variables, it is evident that the writer is dealing with a concept and process to which there is an implied continuum of utilization and application. To be sure, there are many consumers who have stretched their imaginations and resources to develop highly sophisticated cooperative programs and systems. But it must also be noted that there are those who may presently be lacking in

permissive legislation or sufficient insight and information to develop even rudimentary forms of cooperative and/or regional approaches to providing improved educational services.

With this in mind, the writer chose to assume a futuristic posture. Exercising the rationale that the reader can review existing literature to date, the writer has attempted to synthesize the views of others and to incorporate his personal observations of what the consumers of cooperative and regional services may be seeking at the present time and in the near future.

The writer begs the indulgence of the reader and would give assurances that it is not the usual pastime of an otherwise conservative school administrator to gaze into a crystal ball. Ventures into unexplored territory are fraught with "philosophical entrapments" and numerous other dangers. Those who venture too far into the realm of "unsubstantiable reflection" knowingly traverse beyond the reach of a colleague's helping hand. Consequently, the reader should be aware that it is quite possible that the writer's views and conclusions are not necessarily shared by the majority of school superintendents or like consumers.

AWARENESS AS THE KEY FACTOR

The late Saul Alinsky, who headed the Industrial Areas Foundation, a training institute for community organizers, advanced the theory that to organize people, one must appeal to their self-interests. He held the opinion that people cannot be organized around altruistic motives such as the welfare of children or the good of education (Arisman, 1973: p. 2).

School districts, be they large or small, are the most discrete units which utilize cooperative or regional educational services. Specific individuals, teachers, students, or others may be the direct consumers, but authorization, by contract, must necessarily be executed between two or more legally established entities.

Perhaps it is stretching a point to equate school districts and individuals, but if one chose to do so, he might find that although school districts are internally committed to altruistic goals, their external relations with other districts are, more often than not, weighed on the scale of self-interest. Thus, any cooperative effort between two or more "corporate" entities must appeal to their mutual self-interests to effect an acceptable arrangement.

It is the opinion of the writer that if permissive legislation exists, the degree of cooperation among school districts will be proportionate to their awareness of the potential for cooperation to meet some measure of their self-interests. Therefore, if one is to address himself to the consideration of what the consumer or potential consumer of cooperative educational services desires, one will, of necessity, need to examine

areas of internal, mutual needs. The greater the mutuality of need, the greater the potential for the formulation of symbiotic relationships.

In reviewing Educational Futurism 1985 - Challenges for Schools and Their Administrators (Hack, Briner, Knezevich, Lonsdale, Ohm, and Sroufe, 1971), a book distributed to its members by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) to encourage proactive behavior by educational administrators, the writer was amazed to discover the absence of any significant mention of the role of cooperative regional centers in meeting the educational demands of the future.

This 225-page work contains a collection of 200 annotated bibliographies featuring the most prominent futurists in North America. The writer found no direct mention of regional or cooperative educational centers in the bibliographical material, nor are they mentioned in an additional 13 references or the index. However, it should be noted that proposed 1974 AASA resolution number 14 supports the formulation of Regional Educational Service Agencies to "provide with economy and efficiency" a wide range of services (School Administrator, December 1973: p. 7).

Obviously, consumer awareness of potential must precede all other factors. Assuming the writer's prerogative of making an occasional value judgment, it is indeed unfortunate that a greater, collective awareness does not appear to exist.

THE INFLUENCE OF ECONOMICS

Economics has perhaps played more of a role in educational decision making than most educators would care to admit. The economics of

(a) improving educational services voluntarily desired by a school district or (b) improving educational services mandated by imposition from a higher governmental authority are the most common initiating forces for the consideration of cooperative arrangements. When a legislative body requires that improved or additional services be provided by local school districts, it seldom assumes the total added cost of such services. Thus, local districts are forced to comply and seek the least costly means of doing so.

The Federal government has been quite instrumental in developing cooperatives and regional centers. This has taken place not only through direct funding for centers, but more indirectly through its practice of giving high approval priority to program proposals involving more than one school district or a consortium of smaller school districts. Evidently, it is national policy that educational cooperatives exist and flourish as a part of the process of social and educational engineering.

It is not difficult to understand that those who would present an argument for expanded services at the lowest cost to the taxpayer would look to cooperatives and regional centers as a model to achieve both goals. However, the incidence of two or more school districts simultaneously determining to order their priorities in such a manner as to desire to improve or add certain like services at the same time is rather remote. Therefore, it would appear to be safer to assume that externally imposed factors rather than internal factors give impetus to the establishment of cooperative services. Once established, however, internal

factors may have a sustaining effect to the extent that the cooperatives become a part of the educational "establishment."

Hack (1971: p. 75), after analyzing the works of Daniel Bell, Martin Shubik, Norton Long, Haskew, Hensen, Brickell, Goldhammer, Moynihan, and others, concluded that the locus of government may continue to shift toward the Federal level by 1985.

One might then also conclude that the local school districts will continue to be reactors rather than initiators. Consequently, if the consumer is to assume a proactive stance, he must prepare for greater participation in cooperative and regional endeavors, both for economic survival and as a manifestation of national policy over which he may have little control.

COOPERATIVES AND THE CONCEPT OF ACCOUNTABILITY

One need only look down the current list of "best sellers" in education to support the contention that the "educational establishment" has lost favor with the public it serves. Many critics claim that the schools are too bound in status quo, too insensitive to the needs of parents and students, and too self-serving. Others would view the public schools as the "rat hole" into which is poured more money each year without any evidence of increased "productivity."

Legislators in many states continue to draft bills to make the schools more accountable for the dollars they spend. In another form of legal action, a high school graduate in San Francisco has filed suit against the school district because it is alleged that they did not teach

him to be a functional reader. Many reformers appear to think that public education is mored so deeply in the mud of inefficiency, petty politics, and labor-management confrontations that it has failed to be a responsive, public institution.

In mid-January, 1970, Jesse Unruh, Democratic Assembly leader in California, introduced a bill to adopt educational engineering widely in that state. He called for opening schools to help from the private sector, noting that "one of the problems facing the public education system...is that it has no real competitors to spur it to excellence." (Lessinger, 1970: p. 108).

If one elects to negate the competitive value of private and parochial schools, perhaps Mr. Unruh's statement is a fair one. Certainly, the introduction of the voucher system, the free school movement, and other reform-oriented experiments would support the notion that both greater accountability and alternatives are deemed desirable by a substantial segment of the educational community and the general population.

To be sure, traditional, bureaucratic obstacles must be overcome, for as Sebond confirmed, "only those meanings are being perceived and recalled which reinforce images" (p. 149). In other words, we are prone to hear and see what we want to hear and see.

However, an equally formidable obstacle may reside within the framework of teacher union master contracts. With all but 20 of our states having permissive collective bargaining legislation, the teaching profession is now well organized and dedicated to the achievement of high standards for both education in general and the welfare of union

employees. Should public institutional goals differ from the organizational goals of its labor force, clashes can and will result.

The public school systems obviously have a case to make in defense of the charges leveled by their critics, most of which translate into their inability to act or react in a flexible manner. Often stymied by laws, pressure groups, labor confrontations, influential community leaders, "axe-grinding" school board members and countless other forms of sociological and educational strife, public school management has simply become, in many districts, an heroic effort to "keep things going." Educational managers do not have the flexibility or the autonomy enjoyed by managers in the private sector.

Consumers in the future will continue to seek more flexibility in achieving institutional goals, and in a management sense flexibility translates to the degree of retention or loss of management rights. Consumers may find the alternative of purchasing services from a cooperative educational service agency a refreshing experience in the sense that it may restore some of the flexibility previously enjoyed, even if a significant number of restrictions will continue to exist.

In essence, the school district either buys the service or declines to buy the service, thereby reducing at least some of the limitations of job pick, tenure, seniority, due process, lay-off procedures, grievances, and a host of other labor-management related considerations.

Certainly, the labor movement will quickly catch up and organize the cooperative and regional agencies. However, during the interim period and even afterward, the concept of purchased third-party services

should continue to yield a greater degree of flexibility to school district managers. The consumer will have an additional option exercise.

The increase in contracted food services, janitorial services, and transportation is evidence of the educational managers' desire to "buy" flexibility in the form of contracted services. Performance contracting and turnkey construction can also be viewed as a means by which educational managers can shed themselves of certain day to day operational responsibilities, thereby conserving their managerial resources to be used in tasks which are more basically internal.

A good "market analyst" would find that a "battle weary" educational manager is ripe for certain cooperative services. Many would much rather describe certain performance objectives and contract for their achievement rather than to assume the full responsibility for achieving the objectives despite an inability to control innumerable variables.

When a specified population has been designated to receive a particular educational service, either by an internal or external decision-making process, it may seem logical to look to a cooperative or regional entity to identify and/or proffer alternative means of offering the desired or mandated service. Such agencies may even take the initiative in "putting together" their own programs for the purpose of nonprofit resale to participating districts. Such an action on their part would be similar to that of a key contractor assembling a group of individuals or companies for the specific purpose of providing a needed, comprehensive service for a client or group of clients.

As operations become more complex in the public sector, school districts may find it increasingly attractive to seek alternatives to providing all required services as an internal function. Personnel costs are now taking more than three-fourths of the budgeted school operational dollar. The districts, as consumers, will be seeking alternatives to putting more people on payrolls to do more jobs. The thought of buying client contracted services through a cooperative "broker" may continue to become more economically and politically feasible than buying more people.

COOPERATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO BIGNESS

Each year there are fewer school districts in our country. The total number at the present time is approximately 17,995. In 1968 there were 26,983 districts ("Digest," 1972). In Wisconsin alone, the number of school districts decreased from a high of 7,777 in the mid-1930's to a present total of 436 ("A Statistical Report," 1973: p. 6). Apparently reorganization and consolidation are the realities of our time.

The pressure to concolidate is based upon the premise that larger units are both more economical to operate and that they can offer more comprehensive educational programs and services. As one might expect, such efforts to consolidate school districts by governing bodies has resulted in conflict and controversy which continue to the present. As Conant (1967) noted, such sociopsychological factors as community identity, pride, and status become pitted against the logic of cost effectiveness and program improvements when merger is suggested or mandated.

Many arguments continue to be advanced against the notion that bigger is better, and communities still express a desire to pay more taxes to survive as smaller entities. Many opt to get along with fewer services and program offerings. Value judgments abound in this controversial area of public education. The whole matter becomes more difficult to understand as one observes the current paradox of aggressively promoted consolidation in rural America being paralleled by the decentralizing of urban school districts.

Studies continue to be conducted in support of both sides of the issue. Studies conducted in Wisconsin by Clements (undated) and later substantiated and supported by Rimm (1971) indicate that school size does not have a significant influence upon student achievement in the University of Wisconsin system. Studies by Rimm also provide evidence that students attending smaller schools (500 or less) participate more fully in extracurricular activities. Qualitative arguments are also made by both sides on this issue. However, in cold, statistical reports compiled by state departments of public instruction, the numbers continue to indicate that per pupil costs are higher in smaller districts, and smaller districts offer fewer services and course offerings.

And so the controversy rages, especially in the East and Midwest where distance and transportation problems are not in themselves strong counterarguments as they are in the western states.

Consumers in the future will be looking more favorably toward cooperative agencies as alternatives to further consolidation. Governing bodies may also find the cooperatives to be more of an acceptable

compromise both in the economic and educational services domains. As one cannot separate politics from the scheme of man's interaction, and whereas compromise has always been an acceptable means of resolving differences in democratic societies, it may be safe to assume that educational cooperatives will assume an increased role in meeting both the educational and economical arguments presently supporting reorganization and consolidation.

COOPERATIVE AGENCIES AND DECLINING ENROLLMENTS

As school districts decrease in number and become geographically larger, the recent census would support the observation that they are also decreasing in student enrollment. This phenomenon is new to our times and its effects are far-reaching.

It would appear that there will be a limit to what extent the public will allow its school districts to reduce course offerings or services as a general reaction to the declines. Internal consolidation may be on the horizon for many districts. They will close some school buildings by moving children to their newer facilities. Many other prudent measures will need to be taken; however, it is questionable that the public will tolerate a major reduction. Yet, to provide the same level of programs and services to fewer recipients would, on the surface, appear to represent a decrease in efficiency and economy. Teachers' unions, facing increased surpluses and lay-offs for at least the next 10 years, will vigorously oppose any cutbacks.

The consumer will look to the cooperative agencies to play a key role in assisting districts to maintain their services and programs by sharing

with others. Sharing will become an increasingly attractive alternative in coping with reduced enrollments and the problems inherent in the continuing manifestation of the phenomenon.

COOPERATIVE AGENCIES AND EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES

It is apparent that the subject of alternatives has gained currency in public education. The following definition is representative of those found in the literature:

> In brief, "alternatives" is a positive term. It describes an effort to broaden the scope of a school or school system by providing additional things to learn and ways of learning them--and under conditions that a school system sets, thus making alternatives valid forms of education.
>
> Alternatives, where properly understood and professionally run, are not "gut" courses that require no work. They are not separate schools for disruptive or troublesome youth. They are not remand centers for youths with criminal records. And they are not remedial centers for students who fail to "cut it" in regular (traditional) schools. Alternatives, simply put, imply other ways of learning. (Stevens, 1973: p. 2)

Students, parents, minority groups, and many educational leaders are suggesting that alternatives are a logical extension of the concept of individualized instruction. They allow learners to match interests and personal learning styles and needs, to select from a variety of learning experiences.

Some districts have established alternative programs within existing schools, while others have created separate alternative schools. It would seem that another logical consideration would be the creation of alternatives among school districts, mutually planned and coordinated by a

cooperative agency. The efforts of each district would be multiplied by the addition of each participating district, and the number of alternatives from which to choose would far exceed any individual undertaking by one district.

The consumer will look to the cooperative agencies to provide a structure by which districts will plan in accordance with their mutual needs. For example, one district may concentrate on the development of vocational facilities to accommodate students from neighboring districts as well as its own students, thus avoiding a duplication of effort. A neighboring district might develop a well-staffed and comprehensively planned drama department, again to accommodate students from neighboring districts on a reciprocal basis.

Each school district need not try to be all things to its students, nor should it continue to attempt to provide a "little bit of everything." Weiss (December 1972) makes a strong argument for doing just the opposite. Citing the works of Jencks and Coleman, Weiss concluded that school districts have too many goals, make too many promises which they cannot keep, and in many instances are not the best institutions to deliver desired services. Weiss calls for school districts to utilize modern planning techniques such as Program Planning Budgeting Evaluation Systems (PPBES) and Critical Path Methods (CPM) to selectively eliminate goals and reduce services which have little impact on learning.

Comprehensiveness, as Conant (1967) viewed it, may well have to be viewed on a cooperative, regional basis in the future as an alternative to attempting to be "over comprehensive." Participating schools may have

to be scheduled in a different manner, but the scheduling technology exists and is available in tested form at the present time. It may be a small price to pay for local autonomy and the preservation of community identity.

Consumers may also look to cooperatives for the creation of separate alternative schools. This is a present reality in Minnesota, Illinois, and perhaps many other states having regional secondary vocational schools, jointly planned, financed, and operated through a cooperative structure. However, there is no need to limit such schools to vocational pursuits. They could also serve the gifted and talented or those interested in studying the performing arts.

The specialized high school has existed in our larger cities since before the turn of the century [illegible]ith modern modes of transportation, improved scheduling technology, and an enlightened educational philosophy, such schools could become more commonplace on a regional or interregional basis.

However, even where permissive legislation exists, it is apparent that the cooperative educational agencies will need to provide the leadership and motivation. The consumer will "buy" the concept if it appeals to his recognized self-interests to establish such alternatives.

LOCAL CONTROL AND COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES

The writer would be remiss and unrealistic if the political dimensions of the role of the cooperative and regional educational service agencies were to go unmentioned.

With the exception of Hawaii, which is a wholistic state entity, state constitutions provide for the establishment of local school districts, at least at the county level. The districts are governed by a school board or board of trustees which has specific, delegated governing powers.

One of the highest priorities of the various state school board associations and the National Association of School Boards is the preservation and maintenance of "local control." Local control, however, is not necessarily deemed to be in the best interests of organized labor in the teaching profession.

Unions promote much larger units, statewide or perhaps even nationwide in nature (e.g., the Teamsters Union). The power of labor is proportional to the quantity of the work force it controls. The much discussed proposed of the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers and even more comprehensive efforts to form larger coalitions of public employee groups reflect union efforts to broaden their power base.

By mutually supporting legislation which promotes better educational services, increased efficiency, and more prudent use of the tax dollar, teachers' organizations, the school boards, and other special interest groups continue to prove the old cliche that "politics makes strange bedfellows." The phenomenon witnessed in this instance is "hardnosed" taxpayer groups joining ranks with union elements to achieve economies in operation without sacrificing services, with each hoping to achieve different ends in the process. Simply put, larger educational units

(school districts) provide a more powerful union base. More economy will create more available dollars, but who will benefit from those dollars?

The following excerpt from a Michigan Education Association Task Force report illustrates the union's desire to develop a broader power base through the creation of larger educational units:

> Part of the reason for this lack of association creativity and aggressiveness is the unwillingness of locals to band together and strike, if necessary, in order to provide a more stable and potent bargaining base. The plain fact is that up to this point most teachers have not demonstrated a willingness to inconvenience themselves for their colleagues in other locals. There is still too much "me first." ("Final Recommendations," 1973: p. 1)

In several states, the NEA and their state affiliates are presently sponsoring regional agencies known as "uniserves." Wisconsin is divided into 15 such units in various stages of "staffing up." In a speech delivered to the annual spring convention of the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in April 1973, Mr. Morris Andrews, executive director of the Wisconsin Education Association, suggested that reorganization or consolidation in Wisconsin utilize the present boundary lines of the state's existing 19 Central Cooperative Service Agencies, thus creating a practical alternative to the operation of the 436 school districts (writer's personal notes).

It would appear from this evidence that school boards placing a high priority on local control and those smaller communities wishing to maintain their schools as local institutions may find the utilization of cooperative agencies a means by which to survive the pressure from unions, the legislature, and special interest groups. Through the agencies they

have an alternative to effect improved educational programs and greater economy without sacrificing their autonomy.

Consumers will probably become more supportive of cooperative regional agencies when they feel more threatened by labor's influence at both the local and state levels. Cooperatives should present a politically acceptable alternative to further reorganization and consolidation, but the threat to the status quo and the alternatives to meeting those threats must be better recognized by the school districts and the citizens they serve.

THE COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES AND THEIR PLACE IN RURAL EDUCATION

It is the inherent right of every citizen in our country to have access to free public education. It is the intent of our Constitution that a test of equality of opportunity, tempered by reasonableness, be applied to the education offered to the youth of our nation.

Obviously, it is not reasonable to assume that a geographically isolated, small Great Plains community be in a position to offer the same number and variety of courses as a large urban center. However, it would seem unreasonable for the small community or the urban center, for that matter, not to be exploring additional ways and means to improve the educational opportunities available to their youth, especially something as basic as the concept of cooperating with neighboring school districts.

Large urban centers are more comprehensive and self-sufficient by the very nature of their size. Yet, it is not uncommon to note that they take cooperative action and support activities undertaken for their mutual

benefit. Because of geographical separation, the larger cities have not been able to work for the direct sharing of services; however, they are quite active in sponsoring various lobbying efforts at the state and Federal levels. In the future, it is not too unrealistic to assume that the larger urban centers will find it to their mutual advantage to pursue cooperative programs with their surrounding rural neighbors, as it is obvious that each has something to offer the other.

At the present time, the writer can only conclude that the most viable means of improving the quality of rural education lies with the cooperative Regional Educational Service Agencies. They presently exist in each state in various stages of development, from the highly organized to the struggling but surviving remnants of early Title III Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) experimental demonstration centers.

In a speech presented at the National Outlook Conference on Rural Youth in October 1967, Nolan Estes expressed the concern of many when he alluded to the constant "brain drain" resulting from the migration of bright young men and women from rural areas to urban centers. He indicated that if the migration is to be stemmed and if the rural areas of our land are to maintain and improve upon the quality of life, then we must look to improving the educational opportunities of rural youth.

Thus, it would appear that the cooperative RESA's have a manifest destiny in rural America. They will play an increasingly important role in the political, social, and educational future of the areas they serve.

The consumer may well look to the cooperative agencies as the most important means by which to preserve and improve upon a desirable way of life.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although public education has become an unstable enterprise in a relatively short period of time, it is nevertheless necessary to assume a futuristic posture if one is to develop any measure of proactive behavior.

The educator's first order of business is to become aware of certain key factors presently identifiable that will influence the future.

Sufficient school finances will continue to be a problem. Educational managers will look to cooperatives for greater efficiency, especially if there are increased demands for services. Should the Federal government assume a greater share of the financial burden, it can also be assumed that it will continue, with greater influence, to promote more cooperative and Regional Educational Service Agencies.

Rural school districts will likely continue to battle further consolidation and threats against local control by furthering their cooperation with other districts. School districts faced with decreasing enrollments will also look to cooperatives as a means by which they can maintain previously provided services to fewer students.

There exists a vast area of unexplored potential for rural-urban cooperation. Likewise, cooperatively financed and managed alternative or specialized schools are a distinct possibility. The time is ripe and opportunities abound.

However, the cooperative and regional educational service agencies must recognize the potential they possess, and it is they who must take the initiative as "brokers" to show the educational managers in the individual school districts that it is in their own self-interest to join with others to improve the education of their students.

In rural America the educational cooperatives and regional centers may play an especially significant role in maintaining or improving upon a desirable way of life.

The consumer will "shop" the cooperative "marketplace" more frequently than in the past and his "shopping list" will grow in proportion to his awareness of the services available. However, if the cooperative and regional centers do not take the initiative and "advertise" their services, it is doubtful that any other entity can do the job for them. The Federal government and most state governments appear to be supportive. Others, including local school districts, may pay little less than lip service if left to their own initiatives.

The key is obviously in "getting the story told." It may take a comprehensive approach by a private foundation or the Federal government to coordinate the various educational entities to develop a model program on a grand scale. Such a model would certainly be exciting to test against what the future holds in store for American education.

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REGIONAL SERVICE CENTERS SERVING BOTH METROPOLITAN AND NONMETROPOLITAN AREAS

by

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p114 blank

INTRODUCTION

One of the most treasured and revered tenets of America is that of equal educational opportunity for its inhabitants. In pursuit of this goal, particularly in the last two decades, the American people have built an educational system second to none other in the world. Hundreds of new school houses have been built; new curricula have been developed; more and better trained teachers have become available; and State Departments of Education have been enlarged tremendously. A cursory glance at the education profession reveals many additional efforts to provide equal educational opportunity.

Such progress has not, however, been accomplished without problems: cultural and ethnic differences have been difficult to overcome, particularly in certain regions of the country; finances have lagged behind the demand for improved programs; and traditional practices have stubbornly resisted change. From a global perspective, perhaps the most persistent problem which affects educational services to children is school district organization. According to information on file in the U.S. Office of Education, 33.1 percent of the school systems in the United States have enrollments of fewer than 300 students, and a whopping 77.9 percent enroll fewer than 2,500 students. Only 4.3 percent of the school systems in the United States have enrollments of 10,000 or more students, and only 1.1 percent have enrollments exceeding 25,000 students!

The critical point here is not whether there are still too many or too small school districts, although that question deserves attention in another forum. With equality of educational opportunity as a referent, the important question is, "What size student population is required to

p 116 blank

provide the educational services essential to the education of children?" Whether or not the students comprising such a population are all enrolled in the same administrative unit is rather unimportant if provisions are made to combine the enrollments for the purpose of cooperatively purchasing needed services. The most prevalent arrangement for such cooperation has been the intermediate educational unit or regional service unit. A rather comprehensive examination of the development and functions of intermediate educational units was conducted by Benson and Barber and will soon be released by ERIC-CRESS. Further information about this report may be obtained from ERIC-CRESS, New Mexico State University.

In most states where extensive study has occurred, a median student population of 60,000 to 75,000 is required to develop maximum services. Assuming that this deduction is reasonably accurate, less than 1.1 percent of the public school systems in the United States would be able to provide maximum services independently. Therefore, two maxims have emerged: (1) most school systems must participate in cooperative purchase of services in order to provide maximum educational services to children and (2) arrangements for providing cooperative purchasing (such as regional education service centers) will continue to develop.

Rationale for Regional Center Services

The philosophy upon which service centers are developed influences greatly the kind and scope of services offered through the center. In states where the philosophy dictates that service centers are purely service organizations, the array of services will be quite different from the states which delegate administrative and regulatory functions.

Although opinion seems to be divided over the issue of whether regional education service agencies should be purely service or service and regulatory, the primary function should be that of service. Of the 12 states having the most advanced systems of regional service centers, 5 perform both service and regulatory functions, and 7 assert that their function is service only.

There seems now to be a gradual, but consistent, shifting of opinion about the service-only versus service-regulatory philosophy. Perhaps the inherent struggle for independence by school administrators on the one hand and the dependence upon state-level leadership on the other have contributed to the shift. For example, in Pennsylvania both functions are assigned to intermediate units and seem to support one another. The position of the Pennsylvania State Department of Education is that:

> The intermediate unit...provides consultative, advisory or education program services to school districts. The responsibility for administration and program operation belongs to school districts. The intermediate unit provides ancillary services necessary to improve the state system of education (Establishing the Intermediate Unit, 1970: p.v).

This definition of intermediate units in Pennsylvania clearly establishes service as the primary function of the state's regional educational units. At the same time, however, the intermediate units may operate special education programs and area vocational schools and may be responsible for certain regulatory functions. Because of this experience, adherents of the broader service-regulatory function of intermediate units cite the Pennsylvania program as a more effective way of equalizing educational opportunity.

One sticky issue which concerns regional service center administrators is that of assuring relevant services to both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan school districts. Critical to the success of a regional service center is the ability to utilize the total or very near the total student population of a region to justify and qualify for sufficient funds for a given service. In many, if not most, regions one or two major school districts (generally located in metropolitan areas) enroll a significant number of the regional total. And often there would be an insufficient number of students to warrant a service center without them. Such major school district administrators may, with some validity, assert that they can provide that service for themselves better than relying upon a service center. The challenge of the service center, then, is to demonstrate that that service can be provided as economically and efficiently to the large school district as the district could provide it for itself while at the same time accommodating smaller districts. Generally speaking, the large districts have taken a benevolent position in this regard, but new and more effective relationships must be developed.

Regional Service Center Services

Services offered through regional education service centers or agencies currently range from those which provide merely a planning function to those operating a wide range of specific programs. Many serve only the needs of teachers and administrators while others operate direct-student programs. Some regional units serve only the schools in a single county while others serve schools in several counties. One of the

geniuses of the regional concept is that, with proper enabling legislation, regional programs can be tailored to compensate for the deficits in educational programs. Thus, the centers can not only assure educational equality in a region; but when regional agencies cooperate with each other, they can serve the entire state's interests.

Tamblyn (1971: p. 12) cites services which these centers may provide to include those to children, teachers, administrators, and the community itself. He outlines example services as follows. Services to children include (a) special educational services and programs, (b) vocational education programs, (c) health and nutritional programs, (d) transportation services, (e) phychological services, (f) special services, (g) programs of cultural enrichment. Services to personnel include (a) teacher recruitment, (b) assignments and supervision of staff, (c) curriculum development, (d) design and production of instructional materials, (e) audiovisual services, (f) inservice programs.

Administrative services include (a) comprehensive planning, (b) research and evaluation of programs, (c) planning of school buildings, (d) centralized purchasing, (e) writing proposals for funding of programs, (f) dissemination of information to professionals and lay people. Services to the community include (a) social service to families, (b) programs of cultural enrichment, (c) adult and continuing education programs.

Although it would be extremely rare for any one service center to operate in all areas cited by Tamblyn, many centers perform a wide range of services. Certain services, of course, apply more to metropolitan than to nonmetropolitan schools; others apply primarily to nonmetropolitan

schools, while still others can be provided to both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan schools. Presented here is a discussion of those services which are appropriate for service centers to provide to both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan schools.

General Services

Planning

Planning is constantly occurring at all levels of the educational enterprise. For example, the teacher plans for the next day's instruction by making a lesson plan; the principal plans when he decides to offer certain courses during the next semester; and the superintendent plans when he determines the number of staff to employ. There is obviously a vast number of areas of school operation in which planning is an integral part of routine school operation. Although service agencies may be called upon for assistance in some of these activities, they are most appropriately accomplished by the school personnel.

Comprehensive planning, however, is much more complex than this. For the purpose of this discussion, planning, as an activity in which service centers may logically provide assistance, includes reducing to writing the conceptualization of, and systematic solution to, perceived needs. Needs assessment is an important component of the planning process.

Unfortunately, the routine, every-day kind of planning is all that occurs in many schools for two reasons. First, school administrators must devote almost full-time attention to the operational aspects of the school; second, most schools, particularly nonmetropolitan schools, have

either insufficient flexibility in the budget to employ a professional planner or have placed this staff position low on their priority lists. Although few schools have employed planners, most have faced numerous requirements for this talent. It appears that the demand will grow as programs become more sophisticated, and as local, state, and federal requirements for accountability increase. Even so, probably only the largest metropolitan schools will be able to afford a planning staff. Thus, the regional service center will become increasingly important as a source for this service.

Awareness

The typical teacher and administrator in schools today--both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan--are well-educated. Practically all have a baccalaureate degree and many have earned a masters degree or beyond. Most are continuously searching for new and improved methods, procedures, programs, and materials. Professional publications and occasional professional conferences and meetings are important sources of such information but are inadequate to serve the total needs of schools. On the other hand, regional service center staffs are constantly exposed to state and national conferences, state agency personnel, educational equipment and materials vendors, college and university programs, and other sources of programmatic information as well as a wide range of literature. Since the center maintains close liaison with school personnel also, the conduct of awareness activities serves an extremely important function which would otherwise not be served.

Specialized Staffing

Specialized services have become more and more important to the success of educational programs. The complexity of today's society is increasing at such a rate that even more specialized programs and activities will be necessary in order for the schools to respond to emerging needs. As a result, we have seen a proliferation of programs designed to prepare people for narrow, technical fields. The unique characteristic of these programs is that of low incidence but high demand. Few metropolitan schools and fewer nonmetropolitan schools will be able to justify highly skilled, full-time specialists because of the low incidence of enrollment. Therefore, one or more specialists may be employed by a regional service center and shared with each regional school having a demand for this talent.

Liaison

Regional service centers provide an avenue of linkage and cooperation between educational agencies and many other governmental and social agencies. In order to provide maximum programs, school administrators must capitalize upon all the sources of information and assistance available. Very often the administrator is not aware of the assistance available from other agencies or the different agencies are not staffed to respond to each school. Acting as a liaison or linkage agent, the regional service center can increase the contact with mutual benefit to each agency.

Other Services

Other than performing those tasks required by statute or by the state education agency, two essential conditions must exist in order for regional service centers to be worthwhile to schools: (1) the receiving agency must want a specified service and (2) the regional service center must be capable of delivering that service. If either condition is absent, very little real benefit accrues from service center involvement.

As a general rule, however, receiving agencies, the schools, want many more services than the regional service center can support financially. This results in the establishment of priorities of services rendered with funds available, and the astute regional service center chief executive will arrive at a consensus among his clients when establishing these priorities. Of the other services not mandated by statutes or state agencies, the following seem most appropriate for nonmetropolitan as well as metropolitan schools.

Instructional Services

Precise delineations between instructional and other kinds of services are difficult because practically all activity of regional service centers ultimately impacts on instruction. Many regional agencies, however, do engage in direct instructional operations, examples of which are cited here.

Driver Education

Driver education has typically been a fairly low-priority course or subject in most school systems. Typically, teachers of other subjects have been assigned one or two periods of driver education or have taught

the course outside regular school hours. Numerous studies indicate that driver education deserves amplified attention.

While the use of driver simulator equipment, multimedia-equipped classrooms, and driving ranges have become rather well-accepted necessities in quality driver education programs, the attendant costs are prohibitive for any schools other than very large ones. As evidenced in El Paso and Dallas, large schools also experience considerable savings when they participate in a regionalized program.

The program conducted by Region XIX Education Service Center in El Paso serves as an example of a regionalized driver education program. This center utilizes four 16-place driver simulators and three multimedia classrooms, all mounted in 60-foot mobile trailers. The total cost of this equipment is approximately $310,000--a cost which no single district could afford--and no single district could utilize all units all the time. Further, the regional staff consists of 29 specially trained personnel. Even the largest school district would encounter difficulty in fully utilizing these personnel, and smaller school systems would be unable to afford them at all. Instructional teams move from school to school, as scheduled, without regard for school district boundaries.

Special Education

Regional service centers have been involved nationally in providing direct instructional services in special education perhaps more extensively than any other area of the school program. Services rendered by centers, typically, have been supplementary to those provided by the local districts and extensions of the state education agencies. Indirect instructional

services include (1) the provision of materials through Special Education Instructional Materials Centers (SEIMCs), branches thereof, or other libraries of such materials or (2) consultation in programs, planning, and administration.

Direct instructional service is most commonly provided in student learning diagnosis and, in some cases, provision of instructional programs which local districts either cannot afford operating independently or cannot operate as economically as regional programs. Smaller school systems, typically nonmetropolitan, normally have only a few children who suffer from handicapping conditions. The smaller number of children involved, usually with different kinds of handicaps, makes it virtually impossible to provide the comprehensive services these students need. Therefore, the regional service center, serving as the organization through which local districts can share their resources, provides an opportunity to offer special education resources to virtually every area of the country

Other Instructional Services

The provision of nonmandated services by regional service centers should supplement rather than supplant school programs. With this philosophy as a reference point, many other instructional services can be provided to both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas which enhance their programs. The key, of course, is the desire of school districts to cooperate.

Examples of other instructional programs in operation throughout the country include vocational programs (including area vocational schools), guidance and testing programs, preschool programs, and adult

education programs. In each of these areas, limited enrollment potentials resulting in higher per capita costs prohibit most nonmetropolitan schools from developing such programs. However, when resources from each school are combined with the resources of other schools, more comprehensive total programming becomes feasible.

Instructional Support Services

As stated in the previous section, delineation between instructional services and instructional support services sometimes becomes clouded. However, the primary forte of regional service centers probably is in providing instructional support services. The most common instructional support services offered by regional centers include media materials and services, inservice programs for educators, consultant assistance, curriculum development, and educational applications of data processing.

There are a number of reasons why regional service centers are more active in instructional support services than in any other area.

First, large investments in materials, equipment, and personnel prohibit all but the very largest schools from providing these services independently. For example, the value of the Region XIX Education Service Center media materials and equipment exceeds $2 million--an investment that even the largest school in the region would be hard pressed to afford. Yet, only some 93 to 94 percent of requests for media materials by teachers in that district are filled because of scheduling conflicts. Smaller nonmetropolitan districts, of course, would probably never have sufficient resources to provide teachers the necessary materials.

The second reason instructional support services are the most popular ones with school districts is that such support is nonthreatening to school administrators. Whenever any outside agency participates in planning, administering, or instructing, there is a danger that school administrators will feel that some of their prerogatives are being usurped. This is very seldom the case with instructional support services.

A third reason for the popularity of instructional support services as a service center activity is the visibility of such services. Even the most conservative educator or layman can easily see advantages gained in this area. Accountability can thus be established and documented more easily than any other area of activity.

Administrative Services

The consideration for regional service centers operating in the administrative services area parallels fairly closely those in the general and instructional areas. Even greater care must be exercised, however, to assure that the regional service center does not "take over" responsibilities which properly belong to the school district. For example, regional service center staffs are frequently requested to assist school districts with developing and writing proposals. This is a valuable administrative service rendered by many regional service centers. However, unless great care is exercised, the regional center staff person will be tempted by his own convictions to include goals, objectives, operational procedures, or other conditions which should be determined by school district officers. These may go unnoticed by school personnel until after the

proposal is approved and funded and then they may be committed to something that is inconsistent with school policy. Other examples could be cited, but this one illustrates the point. Each time the regional service center commits such violation, its effectiveness, at least with the school involved, is compromised.

Prudent management of regional service centers, however, can produce a number of invaluable, well-accepted, economical administrative services to regional schools. Typical administrative services provided to both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan schools include data processing, transportation, cooperative purchasing, classified employee training such as for custodians and bus drivers, and administration of migrant and adult programs. In each of these areas of activity the administrators in one region may enthusiastically support the regional management of the activity while administrators in an adjoining region may feel that the same activity should be managed differently. Regional service centers must have sufficient flexibility to identify those unique characteristics of regions and respond in the most effective ways.

CONCLUSIONS

In this discussion of the function of regional service centers in serving both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan schools, no effort was made to justify service centers, to compare and describe services in the different states, or to review the literature relating to service centers or intermediate units. Those topics have been explored by other author.. Rather, the purpose of this presentation was to present some introspective

considerations for regional service centers to identify ways of becoming integral, useful partners in the education enterprise.

More than ample evidence is available to document the value of regional service agencies to nonmetropolitan schools, particularly the smaller ones. The more troublesome task is to discover and operationalize services that provide additional advantages to larger schools. Without the blending of services which will accommodate both populations, there is a great danger of decreasing support of the regional service concept from larger schools which would compromise--if not destroy--regional service agencies in some regions. However, this author is convinced that intelligent, cooperative planning involving both metropolitan and non-metropolitan educators as well as regional and state officials can carry the regional service concept to maximum fruition in the provision of equal educational opportunity for all children.

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PANEL OF

OBSERVERS' REPORTS:

"WHAT WE HEARD

WAS..."

by

Bill Buell
Carolyn Hunter
Nancy Buell
John Parker

p132 blank

"WHAT WE HEARD WAS..."

The Role of Discussion Groups

Much of the work that was done during the 1974 conference was accomplished in small discussion groups. Four of these groups were formed to look at the issues around which the conference was organized. Each group (or session) was asked to examine the issues and to try resolving them from a particular perspective: that of governance (Session A), "partners in the educational process" (Session B), the user (Session C), and the regional service center (Session D). A commissioned paper presented in each discussion group gave focus to, and a perspective on, the issues being discussed. (See pp. 37-131 of this report for the full text of these papers)

The outcomes of each session were noted and subsequently reported by a team of observers, each of whom attended three meetings of one session. Each observer tried to: (1) synthesize the ideas generated in the three meetings held by his or her group, (2) report on the ways issues were treated from the unique perspective of the group, and (3) recapitulate the resolutions suggested.

In Sharing Lies the Potential of NFIRE

Observers found that throughout the conference, interest in regional educational centers was high but that this interest was fanned into special warmth in the discussion groups. In these groups, interchanges were lively and productive, with problems and solutions shared

p 134 blank

willingly by the various centers represented. Many felt that in such sharing lies the potential of NFIRE.

Discussion Patterns Varied Widely

The results of the small group sessions were interesting in terms of their configurations. Observers found that participants' opinions varied widely from issue to issue and from group to group. In some instances, participants took up positions at a number of points along continuums. In other instances, individuals' opinions clustered around a few distinct alternatives. In still others, heated polarities developed.

A Word About Processed Reports

The summaries that follow represent processed opinions--not verbatim reports--of what occurredin the four discussion groups. A word about processed reports follows.

One of our rich human endowments as well as a source of much frustration and conflict is the "filter" of our particular sensory and nervous systems through which each one of us perceives what happens. Without the filter, it would be difficult to achieve individuality or singular identity. With the filter, it is sometimes difficult to achieve consensus about what was seen or heard during a given event. Add to this biological filter an even more complex screen of personal interests, cultural conditionings, and varied life experiences, and it becomes apparent how difficult the problem of achieving an objective

report really is. It is well to remember this while reading the following summaries of proceedings which were seen and heard through the eyes and ears of the observers. The goal was to give as objective a report as possible, however, the tools used to do so were human tools.

Session A: Patterns of Legislation and Funding

Observed by Bill Buell

The vehicle for discussions in Session A was a paper by Walt Turner --"Educational Cooperation - A National Study of Regional Units"-- detailing the results of his study of the individual responses various states made in the areas of legislation, governance, and funding when they were organizing their own Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA's). The issues discussed and the information cited from Dr. Turner's study clustered around four categories: legislation patterns, governance patterns, functions of RESA's, and funding patterns.

Principles to Guide Future Planning

Since it was agreed that many states with very different answers in these areas have achieved good working RESA's, no particular pattern emerged as "ideal." However, some general principles that could guide RESA planning in the future emerged. The dominant issues in these four categories are summarized below.

Legislation

Positive legislation is taking place, but without an apparent unified direction. For example, some local legislation that conflicts with state legislation is being passed.

Governance

There is a lack of knowledge about the roles the three intrastate levels (local, RESA, state) can play, and this lack of role definition tends to obstruct sharing. In most states, major struggles still occur over the "locus of authority" question.

Functions RESA's Should Perform

An important question that remains is: Should RESA's have a regulatory function? Roles in this area need to be better defined so that the function of the RESA does not overlap with Governance. Another question is: What kinds of services are appropriate of inappropriate for the RESA to undertake? Seventeen states have operating RESA programs, mostly in special education. While special programs are the main focus of RESA activity, rural boards and superintendents are looking for planning leadership from the RESA--if the cost is not too high.

Funding

There is a general need to explore funding alternatives. A number of workable funding patterns that can meet specific state needs appear to exist. However, some kind of permanent or consistent funding is necessary in order for RESA's to have long-range objectives.

All four of these areas, Dr. Turner believes, can be dealt with successfully if the RESA can establish a long-range program based on constant evaluation through, and supporting, a needs assessment approach. In Session A discussions, needs assessment emerged as one of the best ways to make states aware of local district needs. If the local boards are a part of the needs assessment effort, they seem more inclined to take part in the cooperative RESA program.

The best information relative to needs seems to be yielded by ongoing evaluation. In addition, ongoing evaluation provided vital, accountability information to funders. Because both of these functions appear to be increasingly necessary, RESA representatives called for better evaluation tools.

Session B: Roles and Role Relationships

Observed by Carolyn Hunter

The Session B group based its discussion on two assumptions: that the use of RESA's is increasing, and that consequently their roles and their relationships with other partners in the educational process should be examined.

Responding to Dr. Robert Stephens' presentation, the group considered the dimensions of such educational partnerships by looking at the needs of the "abstract" state system, the actual state educational agencies, RESA's, and local school districts. (The group did not reach

the point of discussing the needs of students or the needs of teachers, from which all of these other needs, in theory, flow.)

Based on the competing interests of each of the partners, potential points of conflict emerged. These conflicts need to be resolved in a way that is visibly accountable--each partner to the other and each to the public--and subject to frequent reassessment.

Dr. Stephens' model was proposed as one possible means of achieving those kinds of accountability and reassessment. His model would establish a checks and balances system, which would hopefully perpetuate a degree of local control while meeting the needs of a healthy, growing state system of education. The model was designed to create a process for keeping this system honest--credible to the people in the community and to the various partners within the state system.

The process itself offers continued participation and is open to continued surveillance by all of the parties. In brief, the model contains five parts: (1) the statutory establishment of the regional network; (2) a popularly elected board with statutory authority to make recommendations to the RESA; (3) a general advisory board composed of the elected representatives of each local education agency, including the chief administrative officer, and having certain review powers with regard to the budgets of the RESA's; (4) a carefully selected "mix of regulatory and service functions;" (5) a process of differentiated funding, based on the functions that RESA's might perform and for whom they might perform them.

The fourth part of the model was regarded by Session B participants as the most controversial. Their consideration of the "mix of regulatory and service functions" led to concern about self-determination within the local district, questions about the extent to which the powers of determination are being pushed towards the state level, and an examination of reasons why this pressure at the state level has developed.

As factors identified as promoting a focus on state school systems and their delegated authority, the State Education Agency (SEA) included: (1) constitutional interpretations by state courts or federal courts concerning equal educational opportunity for all children, (2) the various agencies that actually implement due process of law, and (3) the "accountability" schemes that several state legislatures have adopted.

As the group discussed political and legal pressures on educational systems, some distinctions between service functions and regulatory functions became less clear. As a result, some individuals felt the need to redefine the terms "regulatory" and "service" so that a plan could be devised to assure accountability to all partners in the educational process and to the users, the people most concerned aboutservices.

As the needs of users were considered, some areas were suggested in which RESA's might contribute helpfully: (1) general curriculum development relevant to local needs, (2) fiscal management and fiscal reporting, (3) physical facility utilization, (4) staff development and related consultative services, (5) technical and evaluative services, (6) health programs and services, (7) programs for exceptional children, (8) demographic profiles, (9) specialized instructional services,

(10) services that local districts might initiate or request, and (11) other single purpose activities. All of these areas require a broader base from which to operate than a local education agency usually possesses.

The fifth point of Dr. Stephens' model--that differentiated funding based on "what functions are performed" and "for whom"--also generated controversy. It would mean that: (1) If the state requires local districts to perform sophisticated fiscal planning, SEA funds would be used to help implement that requirement through the RESA. (2) There might be a local tax authority to support operational functions of the RESA. (3) There would also be specialized service contracts with local education agencies. These local agencies would then have a budget review authority over that portion of the RESA budget through the advisory board.

Additional concerns and questions that were discussed included the following: (1) Essential conflicts between various boards, general advisory boards, and elective boards exist, not only in the sceme proposed by the model but also in the realities as they are now. (2) Such a sophisticated process is difficult to discuss when funding is very uncertain. (3) Will even redefined regulatory functions, by accident or by necessity, imperil the viability of RESA's? (4) What criteria might conceivably be used to allocate resources and functions among various levels of RESA's? (5) Is the best structure for protecting local powers of determination a "political" model with a system of checks and balances, or might another process be better for achieving educational

objectives? (6) Should policy flow begin with state mandates--in some cases--or with federal mandates, or should it begin with local communities ties? Where does RESA fit in the picture? (7) What is the role of the RESA in professional negotiations?

Session C: Regional Services from the User's Viewpoint

Observed by Nancy Buell

Despite the fact that educational funding increasingly favors RESA's, little has been written about the regional cooperative/service center idea from the point of view of the user. Dr. Mrdjenovich feels that RESA's are an ever increasing necessity to rural areas because (1) rural enrollments may be declining, but the expectations of rural parents that the same or better offerings and facilities exist are not declining; (2) consolidation, once seen as the popular answer (i.e., consolidate small schools into big schools with more resources), is unwieldy when populations are widely dispersed; (3) bigger isn't necessarily better--even if it costs less. Smallness is becoming a valued concept.

The RESA is an alternative to bigness that can meet the economic needs of small districts. Because they bring a decrease in responsibilities and an increase in economic efficiency, these two "payoffs" provide a motivating force for small districts and superintendents.

The user would like to see the RESA serve two functions: (1) fill a felt need from the district and/or (2) identify and "sell" a service it sees as helpful to a district. RESA's can help districts respond to state mandates for which there is seldom adequate funding, or they can

provide special kinds of educational programs--the cost of which can be shared among the region's districts. In addition, RESA's can furnish small districts with planning and innovation help that the districts themselves have neither the time nor the money to provide.

From the rural user's point of view, the RESA is becoming a necessity to districts that are trying to meet public and legislative expectations. The user looks to the RESA to provide economic help, program flexibility, an alternative to consolidation, and help with federal and state legislation--all without a corresponding loss of local control. As the rural district contracts with the RESA for services, it maintains local control of funds and decisions.

Additional issues emerging from these concepts were raised in Session C: (1) Who is the user--superintendents or school board? Are faculties or parents users? (2) How does the RESA maintain financial security and attract good personnel if neither national, state, or local funding is constant? (3) Should the RESA concentrate on curriculum and instruction or on planning and innovation aid? Where does support come from if planning is the focus? (4) Is the relationship between the RESA and the user one of a "supplier/consumer" or of a unified team, or what? (5) Should the RESA be a buffer between the local district and the state? (6) Who is training the special kind of person needed to work in RESA's?

Session D: Regional Services from the Center's Viewpoint

Observed by John Parker

Session D began by considering John Uxer's thoughts about regional services from the Center's viewpoint. He led with the contention that, "With equality of educational opportunity as a referent, the important question is, 'What size student population is required to provide the educational services essential to the education of children?" He noted that most proposed formulae assert the need to have 60,000 to 75,000 pupils achieve efficiency and funding. Accepting this assertion, several important inferences emerge: (1) Statistics show that less than 1 percent of the school districts are large enough to provide services that are necessary. (2) Most school districts must participate in some form of cooperative purchase of services. (3) Some organizational form must be perfected to deliver these services efficiently. RESA's were seen as the most reasonable organizations to meet these kinds of needs.

The Role and Function of RESA's

Dr. Uxer feels that the roles and role relationships assumed by the RESA's will greatly influence the kind and scope of services offered through the Center and that the prime function of RESA's should be to provide services. The RESA function was outlined broadly as being one of assisting in the complex mission of equalizing educational opportunity. This mission calls upon RESA's to be concerned with (1) overcoming cultural, racial, and economic differences and (2) assisting rural areas that in relation to metropolitan areas have lagged behind in doing so.

Services of RESA's

Services offered through RESA's currently range from those that merely facilitate a planning function to those providing a wide range of specific programs. Citing Tamblyn, Dr. Uxer outlined sample services. (These are documented in his paper.)

Two essential conditions must exist for regional service centers to be worthwhile: (1) The receiving agency must want a specified service and (2) the regional service center must be capable of delivering that service. If either condition is absent, very little real benefit accrues from service center involvement. Usually, however, the schools want many more services than regional service centers can support financially. RESA's thus need to establish priorities of services that can be rendered with the funds available. When establishing these priorities, astute RESA chief executives can arrive at consensus among clients.

It was suggested that instructional support services are "probably the regional center's primary forte...."

Equal Service for Big and Small School Districts Is a "Survival Need" of RESA's

Dr. Uxer emphasized that RESA's can't survive unless they deal <u>equally</u> with their metropolitan as well as their rural areas. He comments:

> More than ample evidence is available to document the value of regional service agencies to non-metropolitan schools, particularly the smaller ones. The more troublesome task is to discover and operationalize services which provide additional advantages to larger schools. Without the blending

of services which will accommodate both populations, there is great danger of the larger schools decreasing support of the regional service concept which would compromise--if not destroy--regional service agencies in some regions.

In considering Dr. Uxer's thoughts, the group discussions raised additional issues.

1. On the issue of role, Dr. Uxer believes that the prime function should be service. However, some participants felt that a regulatory 'clout' will inevitably be inherent in these service functions. Thus, the question becomes how to set up the healthiest balance between service and regulation.

2. What are the implications for power structures, funding bases, and organizational behaviors if one accepts the notion that RESA's--far beyond merely delivering needed educational services--should play a heavy role in social change?

3. To what extent should RESA's merely respond to districts' demands for services, and to what extent should they be involved in creating demand? Some felt that this question led to the dilemma that the more RESA's create demand, the less service oriented they become.

4. In addressing the roles, functions, and interfaces of RESA's, has the group looked widely enough for parallel experiences and insights? How have these concerns been met in foreign countries? How do other public and business organizations in the United States respond to these concerns?

5. Do present survey research techniques need to be broadened with a bit more care given to the validity and reliability of sampled populations?

6. In determining whether RESA's act in certain ways, might it not be wise to sample opinion from client districts as well as from the RESA's?

7. What kinds of persons are needed to work in RESA's? What areas of technical expertise should they have? Regarding process orientations, ways of handling ambivalence, and security needs, what kinds of risk taking personalities should RESA personnel have?

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE FOR RURAL REGIONAL SERVICE CENTERS

by

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I want to thank Rowan Stutz and the NFIRE Board for the privilege of participating in this conference and especially for sharing with us some concluding ideas. I will adhere to the format of reading a speech, although I asked one of my colleagues several years ago when he heard my presentation that I'd read, "How did I do?" He said, "I have three reactions. First of all, you really shouldn't have read it, secondly, you read it poorly, and thirdly, it wasn't worth reading anyway."

As I do this I must present a few preliminary observations. For example, I noted throughout the conference that the people from Washington State always refer to it as the state of Washington. They just don't want to be confused these days with Washington, D.C. I am reminded of the little old lady who said she never voted for either party for Congressmen and the President, saying, "I just don't want to be even remotely held responsible for what goes on down there."

I also observe that attending this conference are two of our former graduate students at University of North Dakota, Walter Hartenberger and Don Mrdjenovich, and two of my former faculty members, Ed Krahmer and Chet Hausken. I am proud of all four of these UND "alumni" because they learned two things from observing me: either what to do or what not to do. I believe these refugees from North Dakota would want me to bring you up to date on the latest happenings on the rivalry between our Norwegians and our Swedes as to which has the brighter intellect. You be the judge as I relate an incident gleaned from last fall's crop of hunting yarns. A Norwegian and a Swede were plodding the early snowfall

p 150 blank

when they came across some fresh bear tracks. The Swede said, "I'll take the track and go this way to see where this bear has been. You take it the other way and see where he is going."

Before embarking on what I have prepared for this conference, permit me to make a few observations from the excellent working papers and the discussions. I hesitate doing this because I'm like the speaker who said, "Before I give my speech I want to say something."

Rural educators have come a long way in the 24 years since the 1950 yearbook of the Department of Rural Education of the National Education Association (NEA) first looked seriously at the possibility of the intermediate unit and Regional Educational Service Agencies through the eyes of the nation's county superintendents. At that time Shirley Cooper, Howard Dawson, Bob Isenberg, and I--as well as several other students of the intermediate unit--tried to define the appropriate roles for local units and regional units. It is most comforting to see able new leaders of this movement emerging, many of them at this conference.

Gerald Kluempke's report is an excellent exhortation to establish RESA's because he found their values to be good. Paraphrasing a statement he made, I would suggest that it is the function of the local unit through the best reorganization of districts and consolidation of schools to get the children to the educational services and it is the function of the regional service unit to get the services to the children.

Rowan Stutz made an excellent analysis of the real issues that must be faced and eventually solved if today's educational potential is to be made available to millions of America's rural disadvantaged.

I must also underscore one of the most important contributions of Bob Stephens' report. I am reminded of the time my father showed me how to make a milk stool. A one-legged stool and a two-legged stool were quite unstable, but a three-legged milk stool always stood firm with all three legs on the barn floor. Bob's main point was to view all the units of a tri-partite system of state educational agencies as a unified system. He said, "It will be noted that the central thesis of this paper is that a structurally sound and healthy Regional Educational Service Agency can and should represent the interests of both masters--the state education agency and the constituent local school districts."

We must remember that education is a state function. By this we mean that education is so important to the people of a state that they have the ultimate source of educational power and authority, and thus have the right--through their constitution--and their legislature--to provide for education for all the children of the state by organizing such agencies as a local school district, a RESA, and a department of public instruction and assigning to each of them the functions each is to perform. These are not three levels of educational government; they are three co-equal agencies created by the state. Like the three-legged milk stool, they rest on the same ground and support the same purpose. They do not differ in the magnitude of their jurisdiction, only in the area of their jurisdiction.

Walt Turner's analysis of the governance of these structures shows that the present "state of the art" leaves much to be desired. The

allocation of functions, financial considerations, and administrative procedures needs more research, if you could so briefly summarize the pleas of Don Mrdjenovich and John Uxer.

From this background let me now share with you some visions of what I believe the future holds for Regional Educational Services Agencies.

Although it is hardly necessary in the Rural Education Association to define the term "intermediate unit," it might be well to recall its chief characteristics: (1) it is a county or rural area of educational services and responsibilities providing certain direct services to small local districts and perhaps consultative services to even larger districts; (2) it is the middle echelon of a state system of schools composed of a state department of education (on the upper level) and the local school districts below the intermediate unit; (3) normally it does not operate schools but provides services for schools and acts as the arm of the state department of public instruction.

It also seems unnecessary to point out that it has a very long history, being established as a county intermediate unit in the days when the state department of education had to have supervisory controls over the thousands of one-room local school districts scattered throughout rural America.

By the middle of this century, however, it was recognized that the county was somewhat inadequate in many instances as the intermediate unit of educational services because demands by the American people upon schools were increasing year by year. It was a quarter of a century ago, in 1948, that a new type of intermediate district was established by law

in the state of New York. Intermediate units have been undergoing reorganization, redefinition, and redirection for all of these last 25 years. Enough experience has now been gleaned from their creation and operation to make some suggestions concerning the future for the intermediate administrative unit. In recent years, because of the changed nature of these intermediate district structures, they have been more properly designated as Regional Educational Service Agencies.

In my judgment there are five requirements for an effective Regional Educational Service Agency: (1) a defined and unified territory where services are rendered to the component local districts and local schools; (2) a lay board properly elected to determine educational policy; (3) an appointive, professional executive with a salary fixed by the board and a term of office also determined by it; (4) fiscal freedom on the part of this unit to raise sufficient funds to perform the services assigned to it (these funds may be partly local and partly state or partly federal, but some local leeway is necessary if the unit is to perform its functions effectively); and (5) a clear definition of duties and functions so that the intermediate service agency does not usurp the responsibilities of the local unit on the one hand nor do those things which can most effectively be performed by the state educational agency on the other hand.

The first "Vision of What Might Be" is that one can be fairly confident that in the future we shall see a clarification and a resubstantiation of these requirements.

The future grows from the past, and in making some kind of preparation for this report, we reviewed the current literature to determine

the extent to which researchers and writers in the field of educational administration possessing some knowledge of the intermediate unit's program, philosophy, and purposes have made any kind of predictions for its future. A review of the ERIC collections on the subject showed about 45 ED numbers on the intermediate unit. Practically none of these made any predictions for its future.

This review of the literature indicated that the intermediate unit was on trial and its future has been uncertain. Some writers in the field of educational administration hold the belief that it does indeed have a future in the total state system of public education. For example, Emerson indicated a half dozen years ago that he believed it was safe to say that the intermediate district in most of those states which have a three-echelon system would have a very healthy future. He did indicate, however, that some of these states need revitalization and pointed to Pennsylvania, Iowa, California, and Illinois as states to watch for future developments.

In effect, what he was saying was that if you want to know the future of the other states, see what some of the leading states are currently doing.

Stanley R. Wurster, research associate with ERIC/CRESS, in the December 1968 Newsletter indicated that many future educational functions will require a regional approach and that this is perhaps where the future of the intermediate unit is to be found. This implies that the traditional intermediate unit must be restructured, revitalized, and expanded in programs and services if it is to perform the functions in public education for which it is intended.

On the whole, writers and researchers on the intermediate unit, if one can perhaps overly generalize the picture, have given too little thought to the future development of this unit as a way by which educational opportunities for rural youth can be improved. There has been very little philosophical orientation given to it and most of the research and writing in the field have been concerned with the means of getting the mechanical jobs done and providing services to children, youth, and adults through the local elementary and secondary school districts and local schools, rather than developing a unified theory of intermediate unit organization and administration.

Therefore, the second "Vision of What Might Be" is that someone will in the near future provide for a better theoretical orientation and a sound philosophical base for the intermediate district structure in American public education. Bob Stephens has come the closest to developing this theory in the paper presented at this conference.

That there is need for an improved intermediate unit is evidenced by some recent statistics regarding the nature of the structure of local school districts in the United States. For example, the May-June 1973, issue of Rural Education News summarized some of the statistics recently gathered by Lewis R. Tamblyn. These data show that approximately a third of all of the 13,108 local school districts in 41 states offered grades other than the standard kindergarten or grade 1 to 12 program of educational services. They may have operated grades 1 to 6, or 6 to 8, or 7 to 9, or 9 to 12 only; or, as in the case of almost 2 percent of them, they operated no school at all. The need for some administrative guidance for these kinds of districts is of course obvious.

The need is also evidenced by the fact that some 40 percent of the local school districts in the United States enrolled fewer than 500 pupils. The questionnaires summarizing the foregoing statistics developed by Joel Schardt of Cedar Falls, Iowa, indicate also that the availability of services to intermediate or regional districts was rather noticeably lacking in almost half of the states. Of the 45 states reporting, 46 percent reported neither a county intermediate or regional district. There are some, of course, where the county is a local district such as in the southeastern states. And perhaps one should take courage from the fact that some 53 percent of the states reported some kind of a county or intermediate unit. It is quite clear, however, that the United States has not yet been saturated with intermediate districts performing services for local schools and districts.

One of the long-standing responsibilities of intermediate units, whether they are counties or multi-counties in size, has been to further the local school district reorganization movement and to help local community units to emerge as effective, viable entities for the provision of local educational services. Despite great progress in local unit district reorganization in the last 25 years, the movement still needs the guidance that only boards and administrators of the intermediate unit can give it.

Therefore, the third "Vision of What Might Be" is a deeper recognition of its necessity, especially by rural citizens.

As indicated above, for many years, particularly in the midwest and the mountain states, the county has served as the intermediate unit. It

is recognized, however, as the result of several state surveys, that the county is inadequate because of its arbitrary structure in boundaries and too often its small size. Therefore, multi-county units are now being formed.

Enough experience has been obtained over the past 25 years with the development of the regional educational service agencies to state that probably these units will be further established in the future where needed, including some places where the county is the local unit, by the following three steps:

1. There will be a statewide survey conducted under the auspices of the state department of education or the legislature to determine the areas to be served, recognizing the sociological structure and the patterns of living of rural people, their communication, their transportation, and their economic base as well as their sociological base so that the new units will be organized as logical, multi-community structures. The experience of the surveys in New York--for example, the one Shirley Cooper did in 1948--and more recently in Wisconsin, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and other states indicates that the procedures for providing these surveys and the results attained are worth the effort and the costs involved.*
2. They will conform to multi-community areas, not county or township lines. The township is a system of squared-off land survey, and the county is merely an arbitrary collection of townships. They

*See Williams' doctoral thesis at the University of North Dakota, 1958.

do not conform either to sociological units, economic units, or transportation areas--hence the need for surveys to place together people who have a past history of, and the capacity for, working together to perform educational services for their children.

3. Once the survey is completed, the units will be described in a law and established by the legislature. There will be no need for a local vote because local people will have participated in the determination of the structure initially and their implementation will be done by them under the leadership of the state departments of public instruction. This implementation can be done gradually over several years but their legalization is an instantaneous operation, established by law and performed only by legislatures.

A fourth "Vision of What Might Be" is legislative establishment and local implementation and operation of the Regional Educational Service Agency.

We are living in a corporate society and today is the time for action. As Copp stated many years ago, we are a nation whose major governance structures are built around big business, big labor, big industry, and even big professions, including the teaching profession. The individual today is becoming more and more helpless as a means of effecting change in society. He must unite with other individuals into some corporate body if change in our way of living is to be made. As a result of this growth, there is and has been for a half century, a tendency toward the transfer of functions from local small units to

higher units. To keep educational functions as local as possible and provide means by which the people may have a voice in the education of their children and prevent the transfer to the state or to the federal government of educational functions, local educational governance must be made more effective.

The fifth "Vision of What Might Be" is a clearly unified corporate body of rural-oriented educators who understand the social, economic, and political structure of rural America. We need more research by rural sociologists who are motivated to improve the quality of living for rural people through education and who understand and appreciate the cultural values of our rural society--a society of scientific farmers, businessmen, and small-town merchants with high standards of living quite in contrast with other lands whose rural people are characterized as peasants. Such a group is represented by the National Federation for the Improvement of Rural Education.

I know of no better way to conclude a description of these "visions" than to quote from the address which Dr. Howard A. Dawson gave to the National Conference on Rural Education in Washington on September 28, 1964. He pointed to the fact that we know what our problem is, and we know many of the solutions. What we need now is to recognize that resources are more abundant than ever before. Dr. Dawson challenged rural educators by saying, "What lies before us is to buckle on the armor or courage, discharge our responsibilities, exercise our leadership, and make our performances catch up with our professions. I for one join with the President (President Kennedy) when he said in his memorable speech last

May (1964) in New York: 'I ask you to march with me along the road of the future--the road that leads to the Great Society where no child will go unfed and no youngster will ever go unschooled; where every child has a good teacher and every teacher has good pay, and both have good classrooms; where every human being has dignity and where every worker has a job; where education is blind to color and unemployment is unaware of race; where decency prevails and courage abounds.'"

Therefore, the sixth "Vision of What Might Be" is your assumption of your personal responsibility in doing what you can--in your own way, in your own place, in your own time--to assure the development and operation of the new regional education agencies.

If you do not have these six "Visions of What Might Be," you may well have a seventh. It could be a vision of hundreds of thousands of town and country boys and girls, children and youth, perhaps even adults, passing through our schools but one time only--and deprived of that kind, that quality, that extent of American education which this country can give them, and must give them through nonpartisan, nonsectarian, classless, democratic, free public education if the Republic is to survive. Even with our best efforts, for too many children tomorrow will come too soon. Let not this vision prevail.

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